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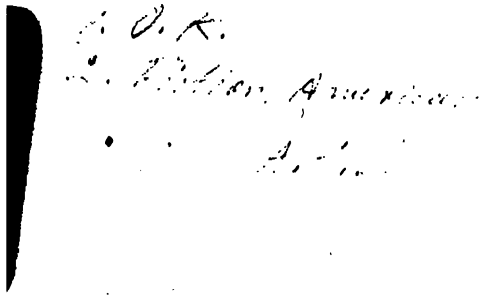

MISTRESS BRENT

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"I LOVE THEE, SWEETHEART, BEYOND THE TELLING, BEYOND THE DREAMING"

Frontispiece (see page 79)

MISTRESS BRENT

A Story of Lord Baltimore's Colony in 1638

By

Lucy Meacham Thruston

Illustrated by Charles Grunwald

Boston
Little, Brown, and Company

993694A

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UNIVERSITY PRESS · JOHN WILSON
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TO

MRS. BELLE ARMSTRONG WHITNEY

TO WHOSE KINDNESS THE WRITER IS
MUCH INDEBTED

WQR 19FEB'36

MISTRESS BRENT

I

"THE day is far too fine to remain within doors!" complained Mistress Brent, as she moved restlessly from window to door; "come, put up thy 'broidery, Mary, and see the town."

Her sister shook her fair head. "The town!" she cried, and then laughed mockingly.

"Yea, the town!" declared Mistress Margaret, whose temper, never of the most even, was easily tried by tedious days indoors. "Faith, child, thou knowest not what some day it may be!"

"*May be!*"

"An thou mockest like a parrot, I will have none of thee!"

Mistress Brent walked quickly across the long living-room and flung open the door at the side. "Mistress Hawley!" she called, imperiously. A tall, gracious woman with youth, yet steadfast dignity, written on her calm face was standing in the middle of the kitchen floor, gazing up to the raf-

ters overhead, from which her winter's hoard was fast disappearing. She turned quickly and looked at Mistress Margaret with eyes so quiet and so kind that her slight temper passed as quickly as an April shower.

"Thou art busy," she complained, as she went with quick movements to her side and wound her arm about Mistress Hawley's slender figure; "what is a ne'er-do-naught like me to do?"

"Ne'er-do-naught," said Mistress Hawley, slowly; "I should ne'er have thought of thee as such; truly thou seemest one born for work."

"And why?" cried Mistress Margaret, gleefully.

"Gray eyes are not oft the sign of laziness," quoth Mistress Hawley, lightly.

"But what is one to do? Mary is forever dawdling o'er her embroidery, or else prinking her dress, or gazing on her complexion which she declares the long sea-voyage hath ruined, and thou —" she shrugged her shoulders and looked about her. Here in this great kitchen was work enough for any good housewife's hands, and Mistress Hawley had held the palm for such in the settlement at St. Mary's since its planting four years ago.

"Faith!" cried her guest, gazing likewise upwards at the smokened rafters, "we have made sad havoc in thy stores. A month agone and

many a fine flitch of bacon hung there. Our following hath well nigh doubled thy household."

"And more," added Mistress Hawley; "yet thou knowest thou art as welcome as — as spring sunshine."

"Aye, and it shines too glorious now to stay within. Leave thy work and idle with me. Come, what sayest thou to taking the air?"

"Is there cause —"

"Nay, but to loiter in the sunshine. I care not to be alone; we are but new-comers, and there are enough loiterers about to stare one out of countenance."

"I doubt it," said Mistress Hawley; "they have gone one by one. There have been serious and exciting times within St. Mary's this spring, but there is quiet now, or soon will be. The men have gone to their plantations and about their work."

"'T was time," declared Mistress Brent, still credulous.

"But thou hast not fully understood the matter which brought them hither."

"And I care not now; come, thou wilt go with me!"

Mistress Hawley laughed, a low, rippling laugh as though it came from depths of content — mayhap a content hardly striven for, yet truly gained.

"Well, well, so be it!" She turned to the woman who sat near the wide hearth, "Chris, tend the fowl, let there be no burning, now!"

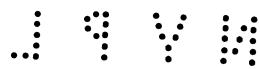
"Art ready?" She turned and led the way into the hall where hung her cloak. "Thy gown is scarce fit for our streets!" she exclaimed, as she threw the cloak about her shoulders and drew the hood over the thick fair hair piled high upon her well-poised head; "rain-puddles and ruts —"

"Tut! the length is soon remedied!" Mistress Margaret caught the long lengths of bright silk and pinned them back from the flowered petticoat, and tucked the train in the fastening. "Now am I ready," she declared, as she seized a wide hat and tied the strings beneath her chin.

"Thou seemest as bright as the bluebirds I saw this morn!"

Mistress Margaret laughed at the flattery as they opened the door, crossed the narrow yard, and turned down the lane which the settlers called Mattaponi Street.

There was no house upon it save Mistress Hawley's, and the coffee-house anear where Giles Brent tarried till he and his sisters should be settled. They saw naught of him as they went slowly down the lane, picking their way betwixt the rain-pools that shone bright in the sunshine or were ruffled with the light wind; the grass in the street and



fields was green, but the buds upon the trees were scarce unfolding, so shrewishly cold had been the spring-tide; now the touch of the air upon the cheek was soft as the fluff of down against it, or as if one drew one's fingers lovingly across the breadths of Eastern silks, and the smell of fresh earth mingled with the salt of the great water near was sweeter far than Eastern perfumes.

"An there were many days like this!" cried Mistress Margaret, as she turned her bright face from side to side looking about her.

"Poor child!" said her friend, pityingly, "our New World hath treated thee harshly: storms and delays at sea, and rains and winds ashore."

Mistress Margaret's piquant face was sober for many minutes, as if she thought on much safe-hidden in her own heart; and then she said lowly, as if to herself, "And yet the spring-tide cometh!"

"Truly it doth, sweetheart; think not as many say there is but one spring-tide of life, that it is but a green and sappy youth which rushes to a brief summer, and all else of life is but a winter, long and drear, and gray and lonely. Through all our life our spring-tide is renewed, if," she added reverently, "we look to One who is our life."

"True, many a time," she went on, "our fairest hopes fall rustling like dead leaves about us, and we look through the bare branches of our life and

think there is naught left; but the buds put out slowly and grow in sunshine, in rain, in hope, in sorrow, 'til life is screened again with joy."

"But not the first joy!" declared Mistress Margaret passionately, as though the words held some hidden meaning for her, — and, truth, they did. Mistress Hawley had ne'er broken the reserve she held and spoken such, had she not noted the long, moody silences that fell now and then upon her bright visitant, the hollow eyes and pale cheeks which showed, sometime, there was war within her.

"Not the same!" Mistress Hawley echoed, placidly; "but fuller, stronger!" And then she was quiet, the sermon had been long enough.

They turned toward the river, where the homes of the settlers were huddled close on either side. Here the narrow point betwixt two creeks was divided by Middle Street. They passed the small chapel, the governor's house, deep set in trees showing their pale-green branches against the azure sky, the market square, grass-grown and deserted, and beyond it the water-mill turned lazily by the ebbing tide.

Down the street they loitered past houses of painter or cobbler or lawyer to the great white mulberry at the sandy point above the wharf.

Before them spread the river, wide and blue

and deep, shining like silver, or dyed blue as the purple violets blooming in the door-yards; here it was still and calm, there the light wind ruffled it, and there the westward sun struck a sparkling pathway across, shimmering and changeful. Mistress Margaret drew a long, sighing breath of delight.

"A wondrous fair scene," said Mistress Hawley, softly.

"Come to the river's edge!" commanded Mistress Brent, as she walked quickly forward.

The wharf where Mistress Margaret's foot had first touched the New World a month agone was deserted; the boats which lay there — canoes and dugouts and the good ship that had brought them thither — rose and fell idly upon the tide; the sand of the wide, white beach was firm and dry, and Margaret seated herself lazily upon a log of driftwood and began to stir up the sand with the toe of her dainty shoe.

"Come, be a child, Mistress Katharine!" she cried gayly, with a mischievous enjoyment of the red on her friend's cheek at the unwonted use of her name.

She picked up a stick smoothed by many a journey on many a wave, and began idly to add to the shining sand-heap, and that being not swift enough, fell to work with a great oyster-shell she

picked from the beach. The waves far out came in soft whispering curves along the beach, gulls and fish-hawks sunned their strong wings or flashed for prey under the blue waves and went circling away with plaintive cries and shrill shrieks, and from across the narrow boundaries of the creeks that ran beyond the houses came the sough of the vast unlimited forests.

But warm as the sunshine fell, soft as the waves whispered, Mistress Hawley's energy could ill bide such idling.

"An thou must play in the sand," she remonstrated, laughingly, "I must leave thee."

Mistress Margaret sprang to her feet. "And I," she looked searchingly up the sandy street, no one was abroad, "I — I would fain see my cousin, the governor."

"He visited thee but yesterday."

"And there was Mary and Giles and — " she stopped, biting her lip; Mistress Hawley, as was fitting, also entertained the governor when he was visiting in her house.

"There is somewhat I must say to him alone," she added, lamely.

Mistress Hawley turned away proudly. "An it be pressing, I will see to thy opportunity."

Mistress Margaret opened her lips as though to speak, but shut them tightly; the words were

ill-considered, and she had learned to love this quiet, lonely woman since the day she had first made them welcome in her home.

Yet the silence betwixt them was oppressive as they walked up the street, though as they neared the governor's house they paused.

"The governor is the head of the settlement," said Mistress Brent, mutinously, "and his house must be ever open to the settlers."

"But not for such as thou to visit him alone," declared Mistress Hawley, austerely.

Mistress Margaret paused by the gateway; the thought which impelled her was no new freak of obstinacy, but the one which had prompted a severance of the strong, dear ties to England, which had upborne her in days of deadly sea-sickness, which had comforted her when her heart fair sank from disappointment at the raw poverty of the town of St. Mary's about which her cousin, the Lord Baltimore, made such talk and stir. But never since she had landed had there been a chance for talk as she craved with Leonard Calvert. She must make her chance.

"Thou wilt not think me overbold," she pleaded, loath to offend Mistress Hawley.

"An thou art resolved, I will go with thee; come!" as she noted the pout upon Mistress Margaret's red lips. "There are some hints of

cheese-making I oft have promised his housekeeper, there will be milk and to spare soon; 't is good time to have speech of her, and 't will save thee the wagging of a gossip's tongue likewise."

Of all things on which Mistress Brent ever thought, the gossip's tongue came last; still she went, thankful of Mistress Hawley's thoughtfulness.

It was the governor himself who espied them as they came up the garden walk sprinkled with gravel from the river's beach. The grass was green on either side and the buds on the embowering trees were swelling, but there was no hint of flowers in the garden, nor hint of luxury within. The governor lived as sparely as the simplest of his settlers.

"Welcome!" he cried, as he came down the step of the narrow porch to meet them. "You do us much honor, fair cousin! 't is not oft such visitors delight us." He ushered them into the room from which he had come, but Mistress Hawley paused at the doorway.

"Mistress Brent hath something she would fain say to thee," she said, quietly, "and I have an errand with thy housekeeper — nay, I can find her; see thou to Mistress Brent."

The governor turned to his cousin, who, now that the chance for which she longed and which she had so boldly plucked was hers, turned faint-hearted.

But Calvert, used to many men and many moods, and used to hearing many a tale within that bare room, understood her. He pulled his great chair from the table where it stood to the fireside.

"Mayhap thou art chilled by the air," he began.

"Nay, the sunshine is glorious."

"It calls one to other work than this," said Calvert, speaking in his slow, deliberate fashion; "clerkly work is ever hardest such a day."

"And thine—"

"Is getting ready these letters ere the sailing of the 'Elizabeth.'"

"Doth she return so soon?"

"Aye, her business is done, she hath discharged her ventures and gathered her cargo; 't is time she returned."

Mistress Brent looked long and thoughtfully at the flame which wrapped the oaken log upon the fire. The "Elizabeth" had been chartered to bring them across seas, now she was ready to return. Ships were uncertain; when would there be news of England, or passing to and fro? She turned with a quick sigh. The table near her was littered with papers dusty and new, quills broken and fresh, and ink-crusted ink-horn, wax, and seal of Maryland newly engraved — the table of a man

with clerkly duties forced upon him and to whom such duties were distasteful. Near her lay a half-opened parchment with many lines across it. She knew it at once.

"'T is the map of Captain Smith," she exclaimed, as she drew it toward her.

"Of Captain Evelin," corrected Calvert.

"But 't is founded on Captain Smith's. I saw it at my cousin's castle of Arundel."

"With many an embellishment," said Calvert, whimsically.

"Truth! what means this? and this?" she asked eagerly, pointing to many terms and explanations.

"Evelin will have it 't is what Maryland is destined to be some day."

Mistress Brent read eagerly. Here was talk of lordships and baronies and manors, and the color mounted high on her round cheek.

"'T is a fair future!" she declared, a ring of triumph in her voice.

"Thinkest so?"

"Why not? 't is what my Lord of Baltimore himself expects."

Calvert moved impatiently. "Thou and Evelin came fresh from his influence."

"Captain Evelin I know not, though there hath been much talk of him. But, my cousin of Baltimore — Cousin Calvert," she added, with a sharp,

quick turn of speech, "'t is of this business I would speak with thee."

Calvert's eyes were wide with surprise, and yet he held himself expectant.

"When I did visit my Lord ere we sailed, there were certain promises he made me. I have them in his writ, but I thought not to see thee. We have come thither, my sister Mary and I, not as appurtenances of my brother's household, but as separate venturers."

"But —"

"My Lord of Baltimore hath promised that we shall take up lands according to the rights he hath opened to all. Nay, hear me to the end, then have thy say. We have brought hither ten servants; we are entitled to a lot within the town and a thousand acres to erect into a manor."

"Surely — thou — a woman — defenceless —"

"My men are sufficient to protect me."

"They might, were a man their leader."

"And will, with a woman for head."

"To go into this wilderness! thou hast not dreamt a tithe its dangers. True, the Indians molest us not and are forbid to cross the Patuxent, one is scarce seen in a six-month; but further away — and then, the wild beasts — 't is folly, madness!"

"Thou wilt find it sense," declared Mistress

Margaret, springing impatiently to her feet and shaking thereby the long folds of her silken train from their fastenings.

Calvert looked at the slim, straight figure in its silken draperies, at the slender throat bared by the collar that rose stiff-starched behind her dark hair, but came low and narrow fair to her bust, at the small hands meshed in lace.

"Cousin," he said gravely, as he lifted her slender fingers in his, "such is not the work for thee."

"Then what is it, prithee?" cried Mistress Margaret petulantly, though her eyes fell before the look she saw — half mocking, half admiring — on her cousin's face.

"'T is such as thou," he said, as he kissed the fingers, according to his cousinly prerogative, "will make the heaven of our New World — "

"Then what wouldst thou have me do? There is scarce room in Mistress Hawley's for our chests. We crowd her, and methinks might starve her, too."

"There can be no starvation in St. Mary's," asserted Calvert, proudly, "'t is the tale of Jamestown and of Plymouth; we have had to spare. Yet will I look to it that Mistress Hawley suffers not."

"Thou wilt see she is plenished at our expense," begged Mistress Brent.

"Thou art the guest of the settlement," said Calvert, gravely, "'til thy brother is ready for thee."

Mistress Brent lifted her small head proudly.

"He hath been with me but this morn," said Calvert, quickly; "his grants are already made."

"Where?"

The governor rolled out the parchment map. "Here on this side the creek, behind our house. 'T is not in the town proper; he will have a hundred acres there. 'T will be most desirable," he added, musingly; "the land will run from the river to the street of Mattaponi, and there will be room for park and shrubbery, lawn and garden, an he so desire."

"And the land nearest him, is it yet unclaimed?"

Calvert nodded his assent.

"Then, good cousin, it is ours. See thou grantest it not to another, else will my Lord of Baltimore's anger be hot."

"'T is hot enough, good faith, already."

"Then," cried Mistress Brent, glad enough now she had fired her shot to lurk somewhat in ambush, "why dost thou vex him so?"

"I — vex him!"

"Did he not tell me of the many things he asked of thee, and thy churlish refusal e'en to notice them?"

"And he told thee such idle tales!"

"We talked of little else save Maryland," said Mistress Brent.

"And he told thee this when — Cousin, thou hast heard the gossip of the town? Hast heard of the Assembly convened here? hast heard of the laws sent over by my brother? hast heard how the settlers disdained them? hast heard of our trouble with Kent? and yet, with this mountain pressing upon me, he will write and — and ask for redbirds or how fareth his drove of goats, forsooth."

"Nay —"

"See! here are the letters I have writ him to be sent by the 'Elizabeth.'" He unfolded the parchment, but Mistress Hawley, her errand done, came to recall her guest.

"'T is late," she declared, "and I must home;" and then with quick housewifely eye she searched the room, the litter of dusty papers on the table, the tarnished silver of the candlestick, the unkempt hearth. "Truly the governor's housekeeper might keep his house in better condition!" she told herself indignantly, and then a feeling she had oft felt, a pity for the man, though he was brother to my Lord Proprietor and governor of Maryland, asserted itself.

"Wilt thou not come with us?" she asked;

"thou hast no guest, thy supper will be solitary else."

The governor folded the letters quickly and slipped them in the pocket of his velvet doublet. "That will I gladly!" he declared, and he went with them, talking lightly, out into the spring sunshine, which threw long shadows across his lawn, and down the street and lane.

The cowherds were driving in the cattle and Mistress Hawley hurried on; her dairy was her pride. In her hall she left them, and Mistress Brent smiled as she entered the wide low-raftered living-room where no one tarried; truly at last she could see the governor face to face and alone, and, womanlike, she thought to manage him by this new clue he had given her, the confidence of his grievances.

It seemed the hour of confidences; the sweet influences of the fresh spring day, the inviting glow of the low-burning fire, and the witchery of the woman who was of his own race and blood, and who was the only one, save Mistress Hawley, too grave and reticent and akin to his own disposition to invite his confessions, who had come in touch with his life since he sailed from England four years agone, all made it so.

With a sigh of content he settled himself within the chair Mary had left vacant, but what-

ever his mood, Mistress Brent left him little time for gallantry, though voice was soft and eyes were bright and lips were red, it was of those letters she spoke, and quickly, ere the talk would be on other themes.

"And wouldst thou know while this Kentish thorn is in our side and while the settlers defy his power, for what my brother chides me; listen to what I writ this bright day whilst thou couldst wander abroad."

He looked hurriedly down the first few sentences. "Here," he said, earnestly. [1]"'The cedar you writ for by him I could not procure to send this yeare by reason there is very few to be found that are useful timber trees; two I heard of far up in Patuxent River, and two others upon Popelyes Island in the bay nere to Kent, and the freight and other charges for the shipping them will be so dear that I made a question whether you would think fitt to undergo it: it will stand in eight or ten pounds a tonne freight for England.'"

He looked across at his cousin, her slim figure was erect in her low chair, the shine of the firelight was on her bright face. "And this," he said:

"'The matts which you wrote for amount to such a charge to be brought from the Indians

[1] Maryland Historical Society Fund Publications, Calvert Letters.

that I had not sufficient means to purchase it, it is not lesse than forty pounds worth of truck out of England will buy 350 yards of matt, besides the charge of making them in twenty several Indian towns, for unless they be bespoken there is very few to be had but such as are not worth buying to give a friend, and besides for the use you intend them it is necessaire they be all of one make, else they cannot flower a room; and before I shall procure so many yards, I must send all the province ouer.'" . . .

"'The redbird your lordship did desire I did obtain, and yet was most unfortunate, for my servant, who kept it caged, did neglect it whereby it died.'"

He read here and there from the long letters he had writ.

"And 't is of this he thinks, whilst —"

"Cousin Calvert," interrupted Mistress Brent, softly, "thou canst scarce understand, since this venture hath not turned out so ill as his father's of Avalon, thy brother hath mighty dreams. Witness the map of Captain Evelin which hath already had his approval. 'T is as if he were a prince of a far country," she added, half in banter, "he must show to those about him the stuffs of his far-off province. The redbird must sing his song or show his plumage, and the mats of queer

sweet grass must tapestry his hall or be made a royal gift to another—"

"And the settlers of his province think less of him and more of their own greatness every day."

And then they fell silent, for one was my lord of Baltimore's brother and the other was his cousin, and my Lord Proprietor's ambitions so jumped with hers she could have no words against them.

II

OUTSIDE, back of the house, where were dairy and outbuildings, the lowing cattle were being milked, and Mistress Hawley — skirts pinned above her trim ankles and sleeves rolled from her shapely arms — was hurrying busily.

The richest of cheeses must be chosen from the cool shelf above the rippling stream which gushed from the bank and went flowing through the dairy house. This sparkling spring had made Mistress Hawley content to dwell so far apart, for the houses on the Point must all be dependent for their water upon the great, cool spring near the big mulberry. The richest of cheeses must be chosen, the thickest of sweet cream must be skimmed and mixed with cool milk, should the governor choose to drink for his supper. For Mistress Hawley's was a woman's household, and there was lack of wine and ale. Perchance sad years had taught her to abhor them; perchance a constant memory of that gay youth who won her heart and then let his fortunes ebb from him

in the rounds of pleasure till he was well nigh ruined and was glad to recoup himself in the venture then fitting from London, or remembering the hopes she had fostered as she prepared to accompany him, — hopes founded on her husband's long friendship with Lord Baltimore, and on thinking on the many chances the new life in the colony might bring, — and then her awakening, as she saw him, shattered in health, worn with the voyage, unable to cope with new difficulties, failing because his powers were sapped when so much might have been his and hers. Then the last sad scene of his death, when he had counselled her to return to the old land.

But Mistress Hawley had chosen to remain. House and lot, corn-land and tobacco fields, outside the town were secured to her; the indenture of her servants was not yet past; when it was she might transport others. This, or a helpless dependence in a brother's household, already filled. She chose this, and went about her daily living content; even if, as she had preached to Mistress Brent, life seemed naked and bare, there were swelling buds of hope somewhere in her heart. Enough to make the upward curve of the mouth more gracious and the deep light of her eyes more placid as she busied about her housekeeping, or as she sat at the supper board

with the governor and Mistress Brent and Mistress Mary.

"Faith," the governor declared to himself, "'t would be hard to search England over and find a fairer trio!" Mistress Hawley was blossoming out in her new life with woman-folk society, and Mistress Mary was fair and full of womanish graces, and Mistress Margaret! He thought on how many times he had puzzled over his new-found cousin since she had landed in his settlement. He could remember her but as a wild tomboy, over whom no restraint mattered. He saw her first, that day of her coming, worn and haggard; to-night she was witchery from her curling dark hair to the tip of her dainty shoe, and the governor was nearer a feeling of content with his lot than he had been since that moment when the Indians had crowded about them on a strange shore and he had waded through shallow waters with Father White, bearing his wooden cross, beside him, and knelt on alien soil while the priest planted it deep in the sod of Maryland.

The gay mood in which they had fallen lasted until Giles Brent, formal and dandified, joined them, and even bent him to their humor.

He must smoke a pipe with the governor from the tobacco jar which still graced the chimney-

piece, and must listen while Mary, the ribbon of her lute slipped about her neck, sang the catch she had learned in London ere they sailed.

"My true love hath my heart, and I have his,
By just exchange one for another given.
I hold his dear, and mine he cannot miss,
There never was a better bargain driven.
My true love hath my heart, and I have his.

"His heart in me keeps him and me in one,
My heart in him his thoughts and senses guides;
He loves my heart, for once it was his own,
I cherish his because it in me bides;
My true love hath my heart and I have his."

Mistress Margaret, with some deep insight in the moods of men, knew her opportunity.

"What is there, Cousin Calvert," she demanded, when the song was finished and the smoke wreaths floated high in the rafters overhead, — "what is there to prevent our taking boat and sailing up the coast in this fair weather? Our brother hath been much abroad," she added, carelessly, "and telleth wondrous tales of stream and meadow, of great forests and wide rivers, — thou wouldst not have us mewed up thus?"

Calvert made no answer, but drummed lightly with his finger-tips upon the board the air Mary softly played.

"Thou sayest the Indian is scarce ever seen

hereabouts, why should — Truth, my lord governor," she cried petulantly, "I had heard this was the land of freedom! Mayhap it is — *for men.*"

The governor laughed.

"At home, perchance thou canst recall, there was ever room enow to breathe. Hast forgot thy rides 'cross country, cousin, when I was ever horsewoman enough to ride by thy side? Here there are no horses, or so few they are needed for the fields, or a horse being got one must not ride afar; the forest lurks with danger, and when one turns to the waterway —"

"Faith, 't were bad if that were closed. What say you, Mistress Hawley?" Calvert turned to face her where she sat quietly by the fireside. "What say you to a jaunt upon the river?"

Mistress Hawley laughed her laugh of low content. "'T would be most excellent," she declared, a sparkle shining in the depths of her brown eyes, "and a providence for the doldrums which now and then oppress Mistress Margaret."

"But never thyself," said Margaret, quickly.

"Nay, I have not time; 't is fine ladies only, they do visit."

"Fine! *lazy*, thou meanest; and whose fault is it, I ween, that I bide lazy here?" She shot a fine glance of scorn at the governor's placid face, but he was impervious.

"So be it," he said as he rose to his feet. "Giles, thou wilt be one of us?"

"I prithee hold me excused," said Giles, stiffly; "I have done naught but sail and explore since I landed. I care not —"

"Save thy manners, Giles," broke in his sister, sharply, "we can do without thee! There will be Mistress Hawley and Mary and I, and thou —" she turned to Calvert.

"Une compagnie de quatre personnes," said the governor, lightly.

"And when shall we go?" demanded Mistress Margaret, flashing her most bewildering smile upon her cousin.

"Aye," cried the governor as if in sudden remembrance; "the very thing; our pinnace hath but returned from Jamestown and is lying at the wharf of our manor of St. John's. I will despatch a messenger, and Captain Rogers will be here ere the morn."

"Captain Rogers!" began Mary, but the half inaudible exclamation was lost in Mistress Hawley's louder, "We shall be gone all day, there must be time to prepare. My larder —" She spoke anxiously.

"Surely I may be spared the pleasure of thinking for this slight expedition," interrupted the governor.

And Mary's thoughts were already far afield. "Captain Rogers!" She had seen him but a few brief moments that rainy, blowy day, when, spite of the biting weather, the settlers had gathered upon the wharf to watch the whitening sail which was the first to come to them with news of home for a six-months. By the wharf's side lay a pinnace, her men aboard, awaiting the breaking of the clouds to sail; and when Mary, the rain beating upon her hooded head and lashing her cold cheek, stood shyly apart noting her brother's greeting, some one had come to her and called her by name in a tone that trembled for very joy.

"Mistress Mary Brent!"

And she had turned to see him standing by her, — Henry Rogers, clothes worn and frayed, but the man, alert, stalwart, ruddy.

"Master Rogers!" she had faltered.

"Nay, *Captain*," he had corrected, striving to say some words to hide his joyousness. "Captain of this great ship lying here;" he laughed nervously and pointed to the pinnace.

"Art going away?" faltered the new-comer.

"But to Jamestown. I shall see thee; thou wilt not forget?"

The look from Mary's blue eyes was fleeting, but the captain was content, though the crowd

surged about them and they had no further word alone before he sailed that day for Jamestown, being sent thither by the governor to bring the cattle bought by my Lord Baltimore out of Virginia for the stocking of his manor of St. John's.

Now, Mary sat the lute upon her lap, her girlish figure relaxed in her mood of thoughtfulness, her blue eyes seeing visions she half dared to look upon, there in the glowing coals — *to-morrow!*

To-morrow was all that April and the sunshine and the fair new world could make it.

The pinnace lay upon the water, her white sails rising in the ether and the glimmer of them shining, shimmering down on the placid mirror of the river where the morning mists still clung. But the governor and Mistress Hawley and Mistress Brent and one other childish figure were already aboard, and the captain would away, though his sailors must bend to big, sweeping oars.

"'T was idle waiting for the wind," he had declared. "They would row till the tide turned and the breeze sprang up."

And the mists lifted from green marsh and white beach and hung their blue veil of haze upon the distant woodlands, and the great, lazy river sighed along the sandy shore and sent one soft breath of a wave rippling toward it, and then rested; then another broke in sibilant lispings, and another,

though the great shining river was yet inert and dreaming. Then the gleaming mirror was broken at its edges as if some unseen force were shaking it into curves that moved first slowly, then fast; running, running to the land, the bosom of the river rose and fell, breaking from its dreaming thraldom. A breadth of dark-blue waves ran across it, a faint breeze chased them, played with them, and then grown fiercer tore them into white-caps; the wind flapped in the sail, the sun struck a diamond pathway on the blue, the pinnace keeled to her side and went racing through water that lashed high about her prow.

"Faith, 't is not so sorry a sight as when I first looked upon it," laughed Mistress Brent, as her sparkling eyes gazed on greening shore and running water, and she would have the governor tell her all he knew of the land about, whence came this curving creek, what savages had dwelt hereon, had grant been made of the land beyond those bold headlands; but when, the St. Mary's passed, the pinnace sailed upwards to the Patuxent, and lurking near the shore she saw a fair field from whence the woods had dropped away, which rose in high clay bluff above the beach and then sloped sidewise to hold a pond scarce bordered from the river, she was silent. Nor was there more that she could find to say, though the pinnace tacked back

and forth near the river's mouth until the governor called it was time to make a landing.

The captain was well content. His eyes had been searching for a broad, low beach, deep curved. He ran the pinnace toward it; it was the one spot he had dreamed of many a day, and the one thought he had dreamed, too, came as nearly true as though he had willed it with the power of sorcery. When the meal on the beach was finished and they lingered lazily, he had chance.

The sailors had gathered the driftwood and made a fire that smouldered to the coals, and from the beach, bared by the low tide, secured many great oysters; now, the governor declared, Mistress Brent should taste an Indian feast, and he would show her some day the great shell-banks where they came yearly from far inland in the autumn, when the oysters were at their best, for feasting.

And the captain, who had been busied all the morning, said shyly to the girlish figure by him, "There are other shells upon the beach and most curious; dost not care to look for them? There are the maninose; the Indian marks them by a blue spot in the sand, and then digging down finds them in a shell softer than the oyster." But curiously enough the captain as they strolled away, if he sought for a glimpse of blue at all, sought

for it not on the markings of the sand, but where it gleamed beneath the fringed lids which most perversely veiled it. And though Mistress Mary's eyes were turned diligently to the sand at her feet they saw naught save that all the world was a glorious vision, and that wind and wave were weaving a low, soft song which beat as an accompaniment to the voice in her ears, though the words that voice spoke were sober enough.

"In the fringe of the pines," the captain was telling her, "there were wondrous flowers;" and he bent his footsteps thither.

The trees grew not quite to the shore, and in the openings where wind and sun peeped through and the grass had not yet full sway the ground was strewn with pink tilting flowers, swaying to every breath, and purple blossomings, and white saxifrage; and thickest of all, a pale-blue blossom, with gleam like a forget-me-not.

"What is it?" Mary cried with rapture, as she stooped to gather them; "'t is most like a forget-me-not, save it grows on a single stalk and the eye is yellow."

"Call it the forget-me-not of our land; thou seest how plenteous it grows here, 't is like our memories. We know how to cherish thoughts; there is naught to teach us to forget."

Mary bent busily above the flowers. "I must

take them to Margaret and Mistress Hawley," she murmured.

"There is a sweet wild flower that grows 'neath these pines; the first day my careless foot crushed it I thought of thee. Dost remember thy flower-plot and how they ever flourished for thee, else I had not thought of them, 't was only that I knew," he went on as Mary had risen, her white hands filled with the delicate blossoms, — "'t was only that I knew thy love — aye, here it is!" The stick with which he tossed the pine needles had uncovered a beauteous growth of thick, shining leaves, that clung close to the damp soil and sheltered the clusters of pink starry bloom.

"Ah, 't is sweet!" said the captain as he knelt and gathered it, "and pink — pink as thy cheeks?" he smiled mischievously as he watched the pink there deepen to red.

Then he straightened himself suddenly. "Mistress Mary," he queried, "what think you of the land about?"

"This country — Maryland —" faltered Mary.

"God forbid! this on which you stand?"

Mary looked up. The great pines under which they had strayed met in solemn arches overhead, and through their sighing tops moaned a fitful wind; the loud washing of the tide mingled with the sound, the screaming of the gulls and fish-

hawks. Before them through the tree-trunks gleamed the river; behind them, as she turned and looked, the forest gloomed and darkened, and in its dusky depths loomed some wild beast that looked at them shyly and then went crashing away.

Mary turned a white stricken face for answer. "The Indian!" she gasped.

"Nay, sweetheart, naught but a deer." The captain was laughing. The moment he had longed for, yet scarce dared to dream of, ever since that fateful morning when he had known her dear foot pressed the new sward, was here — was his.

"Dear heart, there is naught to fear! yet how — dost not see there is need for some one to protect thee —" he went on glibly; "'t is not a land for lone women, faith! the men give them not time for that; there are too many empty hearts and would-be homes."

"Mary, this land — look about thee! — is of my grant. I did intend from the moment the governor's message reached me last night to bring thee hither and say the words I longed to say; thou knowest them already, thou wast but a slender lass when I left England, yet —" Captain Rogers stopped for lack of words, then went on quickly, "thou wilt make my home here in the wilderness? Look up, sweetheart!"

And at that look the captain was silent and satisfied. "But Margaret, Mistress Hawley," protested Mary, as she freed herself from his arms.

"This moment is mine!" said the captain, determined, "sit here!" There was a fallen tree-trunk near them, but the dampness of the spring rains was in it; he unfolded Mistress Mary's cloak he carried upon his arm and spread it for her. The scarlet folds made bright setting for her slim figure, and her fair hair shone like spun gold in the sun shining straight above the tree-tops, and sending level lances through the woodland.

"Truth, I have seen many strange visitants in these forests, and yet I 'd swear thou art the fairest that ever graced them. Come! hast no word for me?"

But Mary's lips were shyly mute, and her lover must read the tale of downcast eyes and blushing cheek.

"Wilt always be so shy? listen! thou knowest in truth wooings are not long in our settlement."

The hand he held trembled slightly.

"Life is so full, there is no time for all the gallant speeches and stately visits thou must think on. Nor is there time for philandering with light o' loves. Here is work for hand and brain. Here is land to be cleared and houses reared. Shall I take my men from the pinnace as carpenters?

Dost not think a house there where the land rises, would look wondrous fair? There, before our door, would be that curving beach where the river flows so deep 't would harbor a hundred ships. I know it well. I've sailed it oft, and lingered in these woods, when I dared not hope that one I loved would ever share this wild life, yet — now — I shall speak to thy brother this night."

Amongst the things he had dreamed of, Captain Rogers had dreamed never of gift for such hot wooing. Truly this life of venture had rendered faint and blurred the memory of an English maid well nigh too young for loving when he sailed from England on the "Dove;" but when he saw her on that morn, her sweet, shy face wet with rain, he could think of naught but an English blossom, dew-besparkled, such as she herself had once plucked him; and the memory bided with him as he sailed on that troublous trip to Jamestown and fought the many excuses the Virginians made for not furnishing his lordship with cattle, for there was little friendship felt by the Virginians for the new settlement, and they showed little will to aid them prosper, even to the selling of their stock to them.

But my Lord Baltimore was pertinacious. The manor of St. John's was his show farm. Goats

and hogs, cattle and horses, elks, could they be found, must be bred upon it and boasted of in England; and they lacked sheep for the breeding. Sixty ewes had been promised from the new secretary of the Virginia Colony, and Captain Rogers must go fetch them and fight excuses and hold them to the point until the bleating sheep were aboard the pinnace. "A damned cargo for the vessel!" Rogers swore, and landed at St. John's.

Through the days the memory of a face had grown and grown, and the thought of his acres, aye, even of the advancement it would mean were the governor's cousin his bride, had filled all his mind. He would lose no time upon his wooing; there were other bachelors within the settlement, and many of them.

Now, there had been no time in all his life, and Captain Rogers's humor was somewhat complacent, when the present so satisfied him and the future shone so bright.

But the sister and brother were astounded. Giles, when the governor had had word of him and pointed out that the captain was a worthy suitor, had naught of protest, but Margaret — it sent all her plans asunder.

She and Mary, so the venture had been planned, should take up land jointly and keep

their household, leaving Giles to his; such they had intended, at least she had. Now —

Mary had ever been acquiescent, when she spoke, with few words; but she was used to this from her younger sister. Was this the cause why she was so eager to accompany them? When their cousin of Baltimore would have persuaded them it was best to let their brother venture first, and they could join him there, and her eager scorn of England and the life which had befallen her had driven her into rebellion against such plannings, was it some other hope had made her sister champion her? She had thought it only sisterhood.

There was no more to say to the governor of her plans. It was Mary who was bright, vivacious, betwixt the teasing of her mankind and the wooing of her lover, and Mistress Hawley and Giles and Calvert who had much to say, to suggest, and laugh over; and it was Mistress Margaret who was quiet and distraught, and who was wakeful long after the others slept.

She stole from the bed, that night when the sail was done, where Mary dreamed her happy dreams, and went to the shuttered window in the attic where the sisters slept and threw it wide to the night; the smell of the salt and of the greening grass came to her, with the singing of the

wind through bare branches and the rippling of the tide along the shore.

Near her in the scattered houses of the settlement the Marylanders slept. Where was the grandeur she had dreamed on, the stately house she would rear, the title she perchance might bear, the power she would wield? At the very first it had crumbled from her.

Would she dare, even wilful as she was, to brave such life alone?

She moved restlessly against the window-sill, and her arm jostled something upon the mantel-shelf by her side. It was the hollow gourd Mary had filled with her sweet pink flowers; and with the breath of their perfume came a sickening thought: was Mary right and she and all her ambitions wrong? for already she had played and lost, and Mary — Mary had found the flowers.

III

AN she had fallen on sad thoughts, it was time, indeed, for the growing of them.

As if repentant of her gayer mood, the New World veiled its skies in gray that lowered and broke into fitful showers and gathered into thick mists or spiteful down-pour.

"Does it do naught but rain here?" queried Mistress Margaret impatiently, as she sought Mistress Hawley in the kitchen. Up in the attic bedchamber Mary knelt before half-emptied chests and looked on gleaming array of silk and velvet and all the gowns which had been procured for her in London. They had thought not then of purchasing bridal array, but only that they needed such plenishing while there was yet time.

"Where is Mistress Mary?" questioned her hostess.

"Faith, she hath a wedding outfit and the plenishing of a house and the thinking on a lover's words to fill her mind."

"Enow, I trow; yet I doubt me she will do much on the planning of her house." The curve

of Mistress Hawley's red lip spread upwards. She had been Captain Rogers's neighbor four years. She thought not he would bend his way to any woman's.

"He is the fairy lord for Mary," said Margaret, somewhat bitterly; "he will do all the real thinking and leave her to her holiday tricks of 'broidery and prinking."

"So she be a good housewife, too; 't is all that any man hopes for — nay, *wishes*." Mistress Hawley spoke scornfully, for she thought on the many times her own clear-headed counsel had been set aside.

But her discontent was for a moment. "And as for housewifery, she hath already begun to question me."

"Come talk to me!" demanded Mistress Brent. "Leave Sarah to tend to that," she turned to her own serving-woman who gossiped with Mistress Hawley's cook. "Sarah hath not forgot to stir a pudding. See thou dost thy best," she commanded the stout, rosy woman, "else will Mistress Hawley not pardon me for breaking in upon her tasks."

"Talk of this troublous wedding an thou wilt," she added, as they came into the living-room and Mistress Brent threw herself into a low chair by the fire and began to poke the smouldering logs.

"Chris, the fire will not burn brightly," she complained, "the rain through the chimney damps the logs."

"But, faith, Margaret," — the two women had grown into much friendliness, — "thou shouldst have much work, then thou wouldst know the value of a restful moment, as now." Mistress Hawley leaned back in her great chair, but Margaret moved restlessly; she had touched her on the raw unwittingly. "'T is the first wedding save of serving men and maids in the colony and must be well looked to. The wedding must be in the chapel, and Father White must be sent for."

"Where is he now?" queried Margaret, quickly.

"He tarrieth with the Indians far up the Potomac, where he hath made many converts."

"But the wedding feast," continued Mistress Hawley, musingly; "would our housing were large enough! There is but one place fitting in the colony, — the manor-house of St. John's."

"St. John's! why is it the governor ever turns the talk when we speak of it?"

"It hath memories for him," said Mistress Hawley shortly, as if she too would have none of the topic.

"And what are they? Nay, look not so disdainful of my curiosity; here I bide, the rain pouring without. Listen!" as a sharp gust blew

the lashing of it against the window, "here I bide, a ne'er-do-well, turned out thy kitchen long ago, and Mary — why should not the governor wish his wedding feasting at St. John's?"

"He doth want it; he hath already spoken of it."

"Then why should he look so lordly whene'er I hint on visiting the manor?"

Mistress Hawley found she was to listen to questionings which were not lightly to be evaded.

"The governor hath had many vexing matters," she began.

"So he told me at the first."

"Aye, but not these, I 'll warrant me!"

"Then, what?"

"Did my Lord Baltimore speak to thee of the Kentish quarrel?"

"Somewhat, though I listened but idly!"

"Then thou must know that before the grant of Maryland was made to my Lord of Baltimore, the isle of Kent far up the bay had already been settled by venturers from Virginia under the leadership of William Claiborne."

"What right did he claim?" asked Mistress Margaret, quickly.

"Right enow; he did hold a patent from the king to trade in these waters and make settlements."

Mistress Brent was silent.

"My Lord of Baltimore's grant covered his patent," continued Mistress Hawley. "When the governor opened the sealed instructions brought out from England, amongst the first was that a notice should be sent of the grant and settlement to Jamestown, and another to Kent Isle, claiming jurisdiction."

"How did they receive it?"

"At Jamestown civilly enough, though there was no great good-will to us."

"But the island settlement?"

"Would have none of us. They claimed their patent and declared their independence, and that they should proceed as heretofore to trade with the Indians."

"And my cousin Calvert?"

"Was content to refer the matter to his brother. But there were others amongst us more hot-headed, and the governor — mayhap he is somewhat too easily led. When it was known that their trading pinnace had proceeded up the Potomac, and that the Indians were bringing down their store of beaver, there were some here who had come thither for that very trade, and the Indians were already friendly with Claiborne's men; they knew where to look for them, and saved their furs."

Mrs. Hawley, fully launched in her story, spoke

clearly and forcibly what her logical mind and common sense had shown her of the events passing before her eyes.

"The news of it roused wrath here; they persuaded the governor to send soldiers up the river and capture the traders and the pinnace. They did so without bloodshed; the leaders, a young man, strong and handsome, and another older and bluffer, were brought here for trial. Their boat and the goods they had carried for the trade and the furs they had gotten were confiscated, and the men were set free."

"And then?"

"Claiborne was furious when he heard it, and fitted out a vessel with guns to fight the ships of St. Mary's wherever found."

"And this hath occurred here? Truly there is little talk of it in England."

"England hath other and greater affairs of her own on hand an I mistake not. But the vessel from Kent and one from St. Mary's did meet in some far-off stream on the other side this wide bay of Chesapeake, and fought; two men were killed."

"Killed!"

"One was William Ashmore; his brother still bideth in the town."

"But this hath naught to do with St. John's!"

"I cannot tell thee all the tangle," said Mis-

tress Hawley somewhat uneasily; there were some things she could surmise but dared not put in words. "But the trouble continued. Claiborne went to London to petition the king; my Lord of Baltimore was there also, and then the governor would fain have had the matter settled, as it should have been, but there were others again; they stirred the people up. Naught would serve but they must fit out an expedition, invade the island, and assert their authority. There are soldiers amongst us to whom battle is the breath of life; and so once more the governor yielded. He headed the expedition. They were successful. They returned with no loss, but bringing two prisoners and much plunder. God wot if the people are as poor in household stuff as we be, it must have stripped them sorely indeed."

"And the prisoners?"

"Were the captain who commanded the Kentish vessel when Ashmore was killed, and one other."

"What?"

"Do not ask me the harrowing tale. That winter had been sent hither from my Lord Proprietor a great body of laws by which the colonists needs must govern themselves, and there had been hot words and wrangling about them. The governor, Calvert, who stands betwixt the settlers and his brother, could do naught with them.

They would have no code forced upon them wholesale, not they; and God knows I trow they were in the right. Men who have strength and wisdom to do battle with the raw New World are men who know their needs better than my Lord who sits at home."

Here Mistress Hawley caught herself, remembering to whom she was talking.

"'T is their right, their inalienable right, to have a voice in their own law-making, and such they declared. They framed their laws; they were adopted. Then here comes this prisoner. They must try their new powers, and truly there were other and wicked influences at work I cannot tell thee of. They brought the prisoners to trial: one swore allegiance to Baltimore; the other — nay, I should have told you the settlers from all the distant plantations so thronged into the town, the fort where the Assembly meetings had been held was not large enough to hold them, and the governor convened their meetings at St. John's. The other, they hanged him there, according to their new laws — the death of a traitor, though to what? He was well favored and courtly, with a face strong and sweet and sad. I saw him twice, when they brought him from Kent and when they took him to St. John's for trial, that day. He had powerful relatives in the colony of Virginia,

and it well nigh occasioned war against us. Had not the king so well known the disaffection of the Virginians and warned the governor against overt acts, I know not what might have been."

Mistress Hawley rose from her chair and walked restlessly to the small latticed window, where the rain still beat on narrow yard and green lane and the houses beyond, but she saw it not. She saw instead the face of the man who had so strongly moved her pity, the face, as she had told of it, strong and sweet and sad. She knew naught of his history, and yet she knew there was naught in it to give him shame, that last day. And they had done him to death.

It was a stain on the page of their history, a stain which many already repented and the governor had done all he could to prevent.

As for Mistress Margaret, she sat gazing in the smouldering fire. She had asked for a story, an idle gossip, and she had gotten it.

These were some of the governor's troublous questions. She thought of them and the views she had heard fresh from my Lord of Baltimore's lips.

Truly there was cause for that preoccupied look, that gravity, that sometimes came upon him; and truly there were troublous questions on this side the water likewise — *likewise!*

IV

MISTRESS BRENT thought on these matters many a day. She was far more quiet than her wont, and willing to yield to Mary's guidance in her plenishings and to Mistress Hawley's in her housewifery, though of the bridal fixings she was soon wearied.

"Faith, Mary," she declared, "Sarah is a most excellent tirewoman and a seamstress withal; thou shalt have her and I will tend myself. She can understand thy talk of ruff and farthingale and slashings far more than I. Not but what I like to go well clad;" she rose to her feet and looked down at the gleaming length of her skirt as she did so, the dainty fashioning of her sleeve and bodice, and turned her white neck in the ruff of fine starched lace to gaze upon it complacently.

"But thou knowest I ever did hate the talk and planning! I could ne'er sit the day through admiring my bodice."

She turned impatiently from Mary where she sat, a waist of blue damask on her knee for which

she was fashioning such a collar and slashings and ruching of lace as she had seen the beauteous lady of Baltimore wear.

"It will become thee rarely, sweet; the blue is as blue as thine eyes, and thy cheek will shine clear as a rose leaf; though I like not the habit thou hast of wearing thy mask o' nights; 't will make thy face too deadly white, and pallor becomes not a bride, not such a happy bride as thou — but blushes — then — "

She laughed at the sudden red of her sister's vexed face. "I will send a better in my place," and she went her way to the kitchen.

She knew well where to find her serving-maid. When not busied about her own tasks Sarah's round and ruddy face and blue eyes big with thought of the astounding tales of savages and adventures which Mistress Hawley's cook poured ever into her willing ear, was to be found somewhere near her, helping a little, perchance, but for the most part lost in solemn wonder.

That ever her mistress should have come thither; that ever she should have seen her so rudely housed and roughly waited on; that a cabin scarce fit for a farm should shelter her, and a cabin of logs; that she should tread rough puncheon floors and trail her garments over rush-strewn floors instead of gleaming boards and squares of

carpet, where there were none of quality to wait upon her!

True, Mistress Mary had already found a handsome lover, but Mistress Margaret—

They did say a maid went not long unwed in this rough country, and her mistress! There was not such another in Maryland, not in Virginia, not in the whole New World. She knew it well, and had she not heard the talk? did she not see the lingering glances which followed her slender figure down the street, the envious look of women-kind at bright gowns and dainty slippers? for Mistress Brent had bought enough of them in London, God wot, and wore them as carelessly as if mercer and haberdasher were round the corner of the green lane of Mattaponi Street instead of mill and chapel, and houses small and rude.

Well, it was her mistress's own affair. Meanwhile she listened now as the cook, glad indeed of so eager a listener, told again how they had sighted the shores of their new land; told how the women, eager to set foot on firm ground, had been sent ashore in a small boat with a great bundle of linen to wash and cleanse in sweet spring water, should such be found, and how the boat was upset near shore and they had barely escaped with their lives, all the linen wearing-apparel being lost; of how they had gone farther in, and

the river banks were lighted with vast fires that night which had sorely affrighted them; of the savages thronging the shores, the one white man with them; of their friendliness; how they had been guided to the Indian village and the wigwams which had stood where the houses of St. Mary's were now built. The chieftain's was hard by the spring, and the Indians had gathered together in some of their dwellings and left the others to the new-comers. The chief had given his to Mistress Hawley, for she was the fairest woman in the "Ark" or the "Dove," and the woman glanced jealously at Sarah. Mistress Hawley had held her place unquestioned till now. Of queer Indian customs she told; of how many, ere the summer was well gone, had slipped away to forest or hunting-grounds, leaving their homes forever, while others had stayed to show the settlers how to till the fields already cleared and yielding bounteously; had taught them, too, to make strange dishes of the pounded maize. And upon this gossiping, whilst the cook held a mortar well filled with corn betwixt her knees and pounded lustily, came Mistress Margaret.

"Sarah," she called lightly, "here is work for thy idleness! My sister finds me not so good a seamstress. Get thee to her and hearken diligently to her talk. Faith! she knows to a nicety

just how she 'd have each trifle, but as for me — "

"What of thy own gown?" asked her maid, who was half angered that in all this talk of clothes which had been about her ears there had been no mention of her mistress.

"This is well enow!" said Mistress Margaret lightly, as she held her gown from the sanded floor.

"That!" screamed Sarah.

"This!" declared Mistress Margaret petulantly, an angry look in her gray eyes. "Didst thou not put it upon me this morn? What ails it? Why was it not fixed ere I wore it?"

"I am thinking o' the wedding," muttered Sarah.

"Then why not speak so? That peach-hued satin I wore last at the court will serve; the petticoat is white, and, faith, I'd not have them take me for the bride! I'll go arrayed in colors."

"And thou wouldst make a fair bride," declared Sarah, stoutly.

"Thinkest thou so?" laughed Mistress Brent, though her bright face darkened; "I trow I can look as fair as maid!"

"Aye, but — "

"Why run thy thoughts on weddings?"

"They talk of them enow about here; there is e'en a law — "

"Law, law! what knowest thou of law? 't is the everlasting prate! Law of what? That every maid should marry?"

"So I have heard," said Sarah, sullenly.

"Listen!" Mistress Brent threw back her head in peal after peal of merry laughter that reached Mistress Hawley's ear as she busied about her dairy.

"What is it, Margaret?" she called from the low door where she stood, her skirts kilted about her knees, a yellow pannikin of milk in her strong, shapely hands.

"Sarah hath just told me the settlers think on yet another amendment to the laws they have been at such pains to prepare," called Mistress Brent.

"Aye, and what cause is that for laughter?"

"Thou hast not heard the whole, 't is that every maid should marry; to such matters have they turned their wondrous wisdom."

"Nay, Sarah, an thou art thinking on it," she came over and touched the stout firm arm of her faithful waiting-maid, — "an thou art thinking on it, mayhap 't is for thyself." She laughed wickedly at the purplish red which flushed Sarah's full face. "What thoughts art thou harboring under that gray thatch of hair? Nay, go thy ways to Mistress Mary."

She stepped from the rough low door to the

sunlit path to the dairy. Peach and pear and apple and plum which had graced the chief's wigwam were thick set in bloom, and about them hummed and buzzed the bees from Mistress Hawley's hives; above the bank-sheltered spring the great walnut unfolded its late pale-green leaves; the air was heavy with salt and sweet with the smell of fresh green growth and bloom.

The peevish look died from Mistress Margaret's face. "Aye, the world looks different here!" she cried; "in Mary's room 't is prison, here 't is life. Why art thou so busied?"

The wide curves of Mistress Hawley's red lips ran upwards and her brown eyes sparkled.

"I am making ready a little present for my Lord Proprietor!" she said, demurely.

"Ah!" queried Margaret, consumed with sudden curiousness, "what is it?"

"Here!" Mistress Hawley pointed to a round low basket, Indian woven of curious grasses. She lifted a layer of dried grass. "There are cheeses, good as the best of Devon, I 'd swear! they have been ripening a twelvemonth on these shelves; and here are fruit," she lifted the strings of dried peaches and apples and long straws thick with cherries, "dried from my own trees last year. They have kept rarely and look as fresh as when I put them aside for some such purpose."

"Though I know not," she added, a little frown puckering her wide white forehead, "how they will bear the sea voyage, an it be long; 't is so uncertain."

"And this?" questioned Margaret as she touched a jar close covered.

"'T is honey, and I misdoubt me as to the handling, and I can ill spare the crock. I wonder — and yet its taste is so rare and sweet, feeding as the bees do on many and strange blossoms —"

"Nay, send it," said Margaret, with sudden fervor; "and let me tell thee this, if thou hast ever favor to ask, remember thy basket."

"An I thought that —" began Mistress Hawley.

"'T will win his very heart."

"Of which I have no intent. 'T was but I wished to show him something of our housewifery."

"And that is what he wishes most to know, dost thou not see," said Margaret impatiently, for, truth, patience sat ever lightly upon her, "when he can offer lands, and talk of fields and flocks and orchards and dairies, 't is more patent than aught else. Thy basket is a gracious offering and kindly thought on."

So the basket went away on the "Elizabeth," and the letters from the governor, and letters from Mistress Brent, of which she said naught to any one, but held her way till Mary's bridals should be done.

The days sped to them speedily, days of stir and bustle and gladness; for the governor was well content to turn his thoughts from the wrangling and disappointment of the winter and make a holiday for his cousin; and the women-folk were glad to have occasion for airing of the gowns they had brought from England, and found so little time for donning, and to gather the pink clusters of the laurel or the sweet-smelling magnolias of the woods for decking the rude altar.

Father White came back from his mission to the Indians far up the Potomac near to the great falls, and the day was such a one as the settlement long remembered.

The pomp of the governor, who was used to going but carelessly apparelled; the glittering array of Giles Brent; the splendor of Mistress Margaret and the fairness of Mistress Hawley; the beauty of the bride; the stalwart pride of Captain Rogers; the solemn hush within the flower-decked chapel; the gay procession to St. John's; the feasting there, — the tale of it rivalled all others for many a day. Though of all the pleasure-bound crowd the governor, least of all, liked this last.

When he saw the settlers throng the halls, settlers come from river or creek lands, from homes along the Potomac or bay or the marshy shores of St. George, he could but think on that

other day not many months agone when these same men had been there with hard faces and stern mien, when they had taken matters in their own hands and wrested from him the power which he considered rightfully his; and when he was in the big, wide room which ran the length of the house and had been intended for just such purposes, the assembling of all the people together, he saw that room filled with angry men, and a slender, purposeful figure in their midst. He could fairly hear the sighing of the trees on the headland, the trees beneath which they had hanged him.

But the strains which filled the room were gay and lively. There was music of fiddle and flute, and the governor must dance a measure with the bride. Such things should be forgot. And as he danced, stately and slow with courtly grace, thoughts long forgot came back to him. He was in his brother's hall of Arundel, the house was thronged with brilliant guests, the dance was a thing of the night, and on the morrow would be gay hunting or merry clash of bowls within the alley, or the careless lingering by beauty's side. Life was merry and glad and sweet, and he was no longer an exile in a rough land, a patient buttress 'twixt the determined men who had sailed with him and the quick humors of his brother.

There were no gray streaks in his abundant hair,

nor lines about his eyes. And the slim and palpitating beauty whose finger-tips touched his — he raised his eyes, and there not far away stood Mistress Margaret. The sheath of satin which enclosed her shone like the sunset hues his tired eyes had often watched upon the rippling river of St. Mary's; it fell in billowing folds about her feet; he saw the sheen of her skirt, gold glinted, the laces that half veiled her breast and rose in stiff guard about her slender throat, the wilful, curly hair high coiled and stuck through with golden daggers, and the piquant face, cleared of the storms he had sometimes seen upon it, flushed and bright and laughter-loving.

He led the bride to her waiting bridegroom. "Mistress Margaret, thou wilt tread this measure with me?"

"My feet are fair itching," she declared; "and not a cavalier —"

"Nay, thou dost them scant justice; they dare not —"

"'Til the governor and the bride be done."

"Scarce then. Nay, fair cousin, thou didst see thy mirror when thy toilet was done; look about thee!" The governor half sighed at the comparison his words called forth. The women, what few there were, were dressed in gowns fashioned half a decade gone, and were browned and scorched

by the suns of Maryland, with marks of toil and thoughtfulness upon them.

"They are birds of sober plumage, but thou art a bird of paradise!"

Mistress Brent's quick eyes flashed. "My cousin grows gallant," she declared, demurely.

The governor started. In the pause after his stately dance the fiddler was playing a strain half sweet, half sad, and wholly winning.

Mistress Brent drew her breath quickly as she beat her foot to the alluring tune.

"Dost know the dance?" he queried.

"I, too, have been at court," she said, a mischievous smile upon her lips.

"Wilt dance it with me?"

"Will the governor dare?"

"'T is the man who asks thee!" and it was *the man* who slipped his arm about her supple waist and in the eyes of the astonished people circled slowly about the room as the music sank in plaintive minor or rose in swelling strains.

The governor had been a rare dancer long days agone, ere governorship was thought on, and his easy steps were not forgot.

"I had not such a dance," declared Mistress Brent, "had not such a dance in London."

"Didst think thy dancing days were left behind?"

But he had no answer; he saw only the dark fringe of her lids, her smooth cheek and curving mouth.

"Thou hast left naught behind," he went on, hotly, "naught! There is all one longs for here, or dreams of, an he dreams."

Yet it was the first moment for five years his own heart had not whispered to him a different tale.

V

IT was the governor's humor that Captain Rogers should bide his honeymoon at St. John's.

"'T is a well-favored spot for such lingering," he had urged him; "here we can tarry, many of us, for a day or more and then go our ways, leaving ye to yours. The household is ready for visitants alway; such is my brother's wish, for he ever urges his own purpose of some day coming hither." The governor paused in his talk as Captain Rogers pressed his thanks upon him.

"Aye, man, thou hast a fair bride, sweet and biddable; when such joy comes in a man's life, 't is fitting that he should stop apart from the ways of men to shrine it in his heart and use it to the wearing."

The captain looked up, astounded at the governor's hot words; even the eyes of the bridegroom had no such fire as flashed in his; and the governor, feeling the look, flushed as a schoolboy might have done.

"Thou hast been a trader and adventurer in our colony, Captain Rogers," he began, speaking in stately fashion to hide the confusion which beset him; "thou must now turn thy thoughts to clearing lands and planting tobacco fields and raising of stock. Thou shouldst know somewhat of stock handling, though?" he queried, a twinkle of amusement in his eyes.

"Zounds! an I did not, after the sheep and hogs I brought hither from Jamestown —"

"Thou canst see how we have housed them," began Calvert, eagerly, "and how they prosper."

But Captain Rogers tired of all, save, forsooth, his bride, in one short week. "'T was no time for idle lingering," he at last told himself, "but time for a man to be about his business;" and he left sweet Mistress Mary protesting, and took his way into the settlement to Mistress Hawley's house.

The things he talked on there roused many a thought in Mistress Margaret's breast, thoughts which hitherto had been cloudlike, floating, forming, re-forming, clearing to the horizon and then swarming in battalions, and now filling all space as she walked, in tense thought, to and fro in Mistress Hawley's living-room.

She went to the latticed window opening on the street and flung it wide. Outside the shadows were long in the lane; the walnut threw gigantic

arms athwart the way; a mocking-bird in its branches began to sing, to mimic, first, the cat-bird's call, and then the gull's plaintive cry, to slip from bird-call to bird-call, and then to burst into melody, that thrilled and thrilled through all the sunlit space without.

Mistress Margaret turned her hot cheek upon her arm and listened with a delight that overcame all other feelings and yet pressed upon her heart like pain.

"Thou art listening to our songster!" broke a voice upon her ear, a voice slow and clear, and yet with nothing of the coldness in it of which she had accused her cousin Calvert when she had first met him in the colony; "thinkest thou he can equal our English nightingale?"

"One thinks not of the other when he hears either," said Mistress Margaret, quickly; and in the swift movement of her head, as though she 'd look no man in the eye, her cousin caught the flash of unshed tears beneath her lashes.

"Come!" he said, gently; "'t is soft and warm as midsummer, thou must not stay mewed up thus; 't will bring on heart-sickness, and there is little medicine here for cure." He spoke as one who knew. "This is all we have for remedy, such a day and sky, and such fair green earth as this. Mistress Hawley's rose is fair abloom," he went

on, as if to give her time to quell that swelling of the throat his eye had seen and to send the tears back to their source; "'t will soon cover doorway and window alike. 'T was the first slip of English rose planted in Maryland soil. See how it grows, as all things do here."

But his cousin was ready and smiling, and came to greet him in the doorway.

"Thou art fairer than its fairest bloom," he said softly, as his pleased eyes dwelt on flushed cheek and tremulous lip. Mistress Margaret in mood mischievous or petulant was pleasing enow, but Mistress Margaret thus!

"I had thought to leave such gallantry behind me," she began, petulantly.

"Thou forgettest we are an English colony," said her cousin gravely, though his eyes were yet a-twinkle. "Nay, buckle not thy armor! all things, the hour and fair nature alike, cry peace."

"But I — I am not — I feel not — "

"Then learn to be; 't is a lesson we all need, to snatch its pleasure from the passing moment."

"And thou wouldst have one think of naught else?"

"God forbid! other matters press quick enough; only to ease the armor now and then and breathe at peace. See, I have used the text of my speech again."

Mistress Margaret smiled radiantly. "But 't is a fitting one," she declared, as she swept her long gown about her, and walked the pathway of Mistress Hawley's narrow yard; "thinkest the songster ye term the mocking-bird sang from it?"

"Nay," declared Calvert, quickly.

"And. then?" Mistress Margaret's gray eyes were gravely questioning.

"His song, fair cousin — 't is the moon of blossoms, as the Indian hath taught us, and the moon of lovers alike."

Mistress Margaret's firm chin went tilting up in air; sentiment played little part with her.

"Hast heard that Jack Childs is down with the prevailing sickness?" she asked, suddenly.

"So soon!" said Calvert, in dismay. He had learned to dread the summer and the sickness of the settlers.

"Aye, the ague was upon him this day and yesterday. They did send for Mistress Hawley, and she would have me take him the drink of herbs she brewed."

The governor was silent at this sudden nipping of his bud of sentiment, and they walked quietly past chapel and market square, the governor's house and the simple homes on the Point. Wallflower and cowslip were abloom in the small yards, and Mistress Margaret had a searching look for

each doorway. She knew already the tale of every home: here was sickness, and here was stalwart health; here was rude plenty where the men were strong and ruddy; here, where sickness had lain them by the heel, was dependence; here was a heart homesick to faintness; here, some heart bounded with thankfulness for the bounty of the new land and the freedom from restraint. And she knew, too, and must honor him for it, that to all, in joy or sorrow, want or plenty, the man by her side was truly a friend, who felt the need of all about him, and in many a way unspoken of aided them. It was those of his own class, those who felt they had equal rights in the colony's affairs, who would yield to no authority save what they themselves created, who titled him as slow, unknowing.

Under the big mulberry were few loungers. Men were at work in the fields outside the town, planting long rows of velvety tobacco or weeding the slender sprouts of maize. Down at the wharf lay dugout and canoe slow rocking on the tide, and the waves rippled softly along the wide beach.

Mistress Margaret drew a long breath of delight. "Aye, how I love the world, love it!" she cried. "Cousin Calvert, how a man can tire of life while the seasons change and blossoms bourgeon I know not."

"And yet—"

"Yet, though one's heart be saddened there is ever this wondrous world o' nature, changeful, alluring."

"Unless—"

"Nay, forever! an God grant me a long life, I'll fill it to the full each day!"

"Did I not see tears in thy eyes and sorrow on thy face?"

"Because—I know not—because thou wilt not listen to me, because I am left to eat my heart out; and yet I tell thee plainly I have but bided my time, and that time has come."

"But, Cousin—Mistress Margaret!"

"Nay, listen!" but suddenly her haughty manner broke before the look in her cousin's eyes. "Sit thee here, Cousin Calvert," she commanded, as she seated herself upon a log of driftwood on the beach, "and I will tell thee again thou recallest that day when I made so bold as to visit thee."

Calvert pulled his wide plumed hat over his eyes as though to shade them from the glare of shining water; but beneath its ample brim he could sate them on the vision which seemed in truth, as he had told her once, as though a bird of paradise had strayed to this far region and plumed its feathers on the sandy shore; the scarlet bodice low-cut and short of sleeve; the flowered skirt

'gainst which her arms shone fair as marble as she clasped her hands upon her knee and looked up earnestly at him where he sat beside her, and the whole heart of him quivered like the shimmering waves beyond his feet.

She was talking of many things, going over the old words she had used that spring afternoon when she had sought him in his home; words of my Lord Proprietor, of promises and contracts; but the man saw only the gray eyes dark with purpose and the tendrils of her hair damp with heat and clinging close against her brow, just there where the blue veins wandered. He lifted his hand and then clenched it tightly beside him, while she talked so eagerly and prated of that day upon the water, the beauteous spot they had passed where the land heaved into a terrace, tree crowned, and then dipped down to hold a dimpling pond in its embrace.

"Embrace!" poetic word for land and wave. Was ever nature sentient, did the land, in truth, throb beneath the soft touch of the wave? Bah! what a fool he grew, could not a man think on a maid, could not the governor of the colony hold counsel with the fairest woman of its realm, without such thoughts?

His thought came back to knowledge of her speech; it was of acres and servants, park and

fields, she now talked, and her slippered foot moved restlessly in the soft, loose sand; now the buckle glistened and now the sheen of silken hose.

> "Her feet beneath her petticoat,
> Like little mice, stole in and out,"

he quoted to himself, and knew, while he quoted, that he was fool enow to lay his great body there in the sand to feel the touch of that dainty foot. He looked behind him. Under the big mulberry loiterers were gathering from their early supper; they had lingered longer than he thought. The river ran red with sunset lights, and the women were gossiping in their dooryards, the children about them, or singing English catches and playing English games in the sandy roadway beside which budded Maryland's greatness.

The governor rose wearily to his feet. It spent his strength to curb the strong feeling in him.

"Mistress Hawley's supper waits," he said gently, and Margaret was suddenly angered from head to foot at the coldness of his tone; "but I will see thee afterward."

"Then see thou bringest that map of Evelin's along with thee, and the seal of Maryland, likewise." She spoke haughtily, affronted at his manner, for he had let her speak, speak, and had said no word, and now to put her off thus.

She would see otherwise; this night should finish it.

Even as she turned and her glance fell on the group under the great mulberry, there was fresh cause for wrath.

"There be two of my men," she declared; "my new brother would fain have them for the building of his house!"

"A goodly plan."

"He will take them for no less than six months," snapped Mistress Brent. "They are hired now by the week in the tobacco fields."

And the governor, seeing her captious humor, was silent save for some word to the loiterers at the gateways or to the children singing as they passed, and singing a song of London Bridge:

"London bridge is falling down,
Falling down, falling down."

Chubby hands were clasped high in air and marching children circled under them.

"London bridge is falling down,
So fare ye well, my lady!"

"Fare ye well!" Yet he noted as he looked back that strong arms caught at last "my lady" and held her secure. Mayhap thinking on that brought his great figure to its full height and

confidence to his mien as he walked, his heart filled with thoughts sweet as the blossoming flowers, down the green lane to Mistress Hawley's house.

She waited them with supper already spread on the board in the wide hall, where the doors were opened back and front to the faintest breezes; and on the table's shining whiteness were fish fresh broiled and maize cakes smoking hot, and hominy, frothing milk, and fresh, sweet cheese.

The governor must send a messenger to say he would not sit at his board that night; but the governor was obdurate. Not now must he linger with that mutinous face anear him. There were thoughts within with which he would hold converse, though the thinking on them went like wine to his head, and drew him back to Mistress Margaret's side as steadily as the moon new risen over the waters drew its troubled waves.

Pine torches were aflare on Mistress Hawley's mantel-shelf, and the sweet-smelling myrtle candle burned dimly in the hallway when he stood again in her rose-bowered doorway; and in the hall, restless, to and fro paced Mistress Brent.

He had learned to read her moods well, and here was one he loved least and saw most; it was as if the spirit in that slender figure were at war with self and all outside. Where was the tremu-

lous face to which he had preached his words of peace?

"Fair cousin," he swept the puncheon floor with his plumed hat, and then came closer to her, throwing it and the papers he held upon the table, "thou mindest me — thou wilt not be angry, I pray thee — of the lion we caught and fain would send my brother. We treated it gently as we dared within its cage, tempted it with food it loved, and yet 't was ever restless to and fro, e'en as thou looked now!"

"Until?"

"Until at last it died!"

"Think on no parallel," she cried, harshly; "I will not die."

"God forbid! had we treated our fairest in such fashion we had stained our colony and kept all women hence."

"Thou hast brought the map and parchment with thee?" she demanded, shortly.

Calvert bowed, still smiling at her humor. He knew not how soon it might melt and her mood be but sweeter for the storm.

Mistress Margaret pushed the candle, set in the narrow mouth of a gourd, to the end of the table.

"Faith, I wish Mistress Hawley had some of the stuff lying idle in my chest!" she exclaimed

petulantly, as she steadied the rocking light from the hasty shove.

"Why has she not?"

"Because she hath the spirit of a Vashti and will touch naught, pewter nor silver, cloth nor gold, while I linger on her bounty."

"There are other ways of repaying, and I will see to it."

"What canst thou do? Grant her lands? She hath all her scant number of servants can tend."

"Nay, there are other ways."

"Then see to it, I pray thee. Let there be some way of my riches reaching her. Thou knowest I have enough and to spare."

She pulled the great chair which had been placed in the hall up to the candle's light.

"Cousin Calvert," she said, steadily, "thou wilt seat thyself here near the light." A mischievous smile curved for a moment her red lip as he brought his chair still closer to where she sat.

"Here are my Lord Proprietor's letters; read them!" she commanded impatiently, pushing them toward him, and she leaned back to watch him while he did so.

The candle shone dimly, and yet it lighted the papers and the face above them and gave her time to study the thoughtful face lined with care, the wide blue eye, the fair hair touched here and

there with silver and falling long upon his broad white collar, the sober velvet doublet stained and splashed — it was one of her plaints against him that he had ever little thought of clothes. The governor should go in splendor; there was that tale of my Lord Delaware. It was said of him that the pomp and show he kept went far to re-establishing the Virginia colony; it made men confident to look upon his bravery.

Now did this Cousin Calvert wear — stay! a doublet of deep blue velvet would suit the fairness of his skin, slashed with pink of palest hue, or white, with silver fastenings and such a collar as Giles wore yesterday. Giles — faugh! would she have him such a dandy as her brother? Rather the stained doublet and tarnished buckles, and, she eyed his hat swiftly, the wind-whipped plume.

Her wandering glance fell on Calvert's face. He was looking back at her, and she smiled swift and sweet as summer sunshine.

"Aye, 't is all right," he said at length; "and Mistress Brent would take up lands in Maryland."

"'T was that which brought Mistress Brent hither," she said primly, though she flushed and smiled beneath his look.

"And yet methought 't was but the daring of thy nature which might sicken of us and return."

"Never! There is no tie which binds me to the Old World!"

Calvert's heart throbbed high; there was no lover, then, he knew naught of there in England, whose memory would be a lode-star drawing her homeward.

"And thou wouldst have thy claims made out?"

"As duly as any other venturer."

"Yet 't is the first time they have been made for women," he added idly, toying with the quill she brought him.

"'T will not be the last!" she broke in quickly.

"Faith, I know not! hast heard the law?"

"Some servants talk of it."

"Our most puissant Assembly"—his voice had a ring of bitter irony—"hath declared amongst other things that no woman shall hold lands within the colony, and should she inherit them, within seven years must she be mated else are they forfeit to the proprietor."

"Tut!" cried Mistress Margaret, "as if my cousin Baltimore could not do what he pleased within his own colony; and these," she thrummed the papers by his side, "are his."

"True, naught will o'erride this. The Assembly claims not the sole power of making laws. It must be as my Lord Proprietor and the Assembly say. Only they must needs put the Assembly

foremost, and make it 'as the Assembly sayeth and my Lord Proprietor assents.'"

"And now," said Mistress Brent thoughtfully, "for my six servants, two of whom are hired in the tobacco fields, three at work on Mistress Hawley's land, and one with me, I would have a thousand acres situate," she drew the map toward her and ran her slender finger down the curve of St. Mary's River, —"situate here, an I mistake not. My brother Rogers's claim comes next; this is 'twixt it and St. Mary's."

"'T is a most desirable spot," said Calvert, humoring her.

"Aye," she said, complacently; "and for two other servants for which I have writ — "

Calvert started slightly.

"For which I writ by the 'Elizabeth's' return, I would have a lot within the township, a hundred acres next to Giles. I have already thought on the name I shall call it, — 'The Sisters' Freehold.'"

"Thy ambition is slight."

"Nay," she said, "this is all left me." She pushed the papers aside as if having signified her pleasure, she was done.

And Calvert, writing slowly as was his wont, framed the words which made her mistress of many broad acres.

Mistress Brent waited, beating a light tattoo upon

the shining table with her finger-tips. "Now," she said quietly, when it was done, "I shall get my servants together and see to the clearing of my lands and the building of my house."

The quill fell from Calvert's fingers, splashing Mistress Hawley's white table with spluttering ink-drops.

"A house!"

"In which to dwell," added Mistress Margaret, smiling serenely.

"What mad project—" began Calvert, hotly.

"Madness!" flashed Mistress Brent.

"Thou wilt dwell on thy lot in St. Mary's?"

"Nay, I know not, 't will scarce content me; mayhap later on, but I build on the manor first."

"Thou canst not live there."

"Canst not?"

"Thou wilt not dare!"

"What need I fear?"

"Name o' God, cousin, there is the Indian!"

"And have I not heard thee say an Indian scarce shows his face in a six-months, and it was hard to come by the arrows ye needed to send my lord for his yearly tribute to be delivered at Windsor Castle?"

"At St. Mary's, but that is far afield. And the beasts; know ye not that the panther and bear lurk within these dread forests?"

"Ye scare me not. My men are good huntsmen."

Calvert made an impatient movement. "Will they be ever near there? I tell thee a man — a *man* takes his life within his hand who ventures thus."

"Methinks I am as brave as Captain Rogers or my brother Giles."

"Brave! 't is not a question of the spirit, but of actual warfare. What could these do," he caught her hands impetuously within his grasp, — "what could these do an the fierce bear came upon thy doorstep as he did e'en last winter to a settler's cabin on the St. George's and seized the babe within the hall?"

"I should fight him off."

"Or the panther spring upon thee — thou knowest not. These hands were made for lover's kisses or softest touch, and thy shoulders" — he caught her to him ere she had any thought of the words he meant to say, he bent above them passionately, the soft flesh curving in the farthingale — "for this, dear heart, for this," as he stooped to rain hot kisses on their curves.

"Cousin—Calvert—" panted Mistress Margaret.

"Ah, I have frightened thee! Child, thou shouldst not so have wrought upon me! But thou wilt none of it, this wild project; bide here

with me! I love thee, sweetheart, beyond the telling, beyond the dreaming. What—" for she had sunk into the chair and thrown her arms above her head on the ink-splashed table. "Margaret, I have frightened thee, but I will not again; listen, sweetheart, bide here in Mistress Hawley's house awhile, and—" he stopped, breathing hard. "Wilt not try to love me? Am I so uncouth, have I forgot—"

Mistress Margaret threw out one quivering hand in protest, and Calvert seized it as he knelt by her side.

"Then, canst not think on what I said, to-morrow?"

"Nay, *never!*" cried Mistress Margaret, lifting a face, tear-stained and pain-drawn, "never! think not on it, put it far from thee, hate me an thou wilt, but love me, never!"

She rose to her feet, while he still knelt, his face turned upward, grief-stricken, astounded.

"Thou lookest a saint," she cried bitterly, "and I the fiend who tortures thee!"

"Thou art the sweetest," declared Calvert sturdily; "and yet," he rose to his feet, "must it be indeed as thou sayest?"

"In truth!"

"Some day—"

She flung herself again into the chair, her white

arms above her head. "Go," she beseeched him, "go!"

"I cannot leave thee thus."

"I beg thee go!"

He turned to the doorway and then turned back again. In all the silent house he knew none waked save them. Mistress Hawley, tired with her tasks, was long abed. He had seen her pause at the doorway and then go to her own; the men and maids he knew were at rest in their quarters. He came back, barred the heavy door behind her, blew out the flaring low-burned torches on the mantel-shelf within the living-room, clasped the latticed window, and came once more to the sobbing figure. He bent above her, kissing softly the high coils of her dark hair. "I am gone, sweetheart; I'll trouble thee no more," he said, and was gone.

But Margaret, spent, broken in the hour she so long had wished, broken with the passion of a storm she had thought long past, face to face once more with a grief-wrung past, mourned for herself and the man, whose loving heart had been bared before her, alike; and the candles died out ere she groped her way to the attic room where the stars shone through the opened window. "Thank God for the stars!" she cried as she threw herself upon her bed.

VI

MISTRESS BRENT had her way, but from that day began her enmity with her brother-in-law.

Captain Rogers would have her servants for his own hire, when servants were scarce to be had, and he was consumed with impatience for pushing forward the building of his house.

Mistress Brent was building her own, and had she not angered him before, she had doubly done so now. Every caution he approved she threw to the wind. That she should so venture was past all dreaming; that she should plan a dwelling large and stately, with lawn tree-shaded and terraced to the shore where her own wharf should be built, while he was building small and narrow with palisaded yard from which all trees were cut lest they should harbor an enemy, was an offence unpardonable; to find, without her prating on it, that brick and lumber had been written for from Jamestown, and glass and furnishings from England; to see, when his work was done and his house of clapboard and smooth-hewn logs was finished in the yard of raw stumps and beaten

earth, Mistress Brent's slowly finished midst towering trees, where it shone fair as an English homestead; it roused strong words of biting criticism until they reached even the governor's ears.

"'T is madness, sheer madness!" Captain Rogers had declared, "to build in such fashion when the laws of Virginia demand that no outlying dwelling shall be built without a palisade; to build thus and dwell alone!"

"Mistress Brent hath great dependence on her trustworthy servants," the governor took occasion to tell her irate brother-in-law; "she declares they are worth a score of some husbands she hath seen."

The governor spoke with a gentle touch of irony in his tones, as he recalled one of his cousin's earlier, biting speeches. She had grown gentler now, far too gentle, he thought; he would rather see her in tempestuous mood of scorn or anger, with her quick manner of soothing speech and beguiling smile, as if she would heal the wound she made. But the quiet earnestness which had come upon her since that night when she had loitered so happily through the streets of St. Mary's, when cowslips and wallflowers were abloom in the dooryards, seemed centuries ago. Sweet wild strawberries had blossomed and ripened since then, the green fields of Indian corn

without the town had run to yellowing tassels, and the pungent leaves of velvety tobacco were drying in the long sheds.

Mistress Brent had come and gone betwixt her manor-house and Mistress Hawley's; ships had unloaded her goods at St. Mary's and at her own wharf; while she went ever serious as one who hath begun to write a new page of life and would see it fairly done. Through it all the governor's eyes were upon her. She little thought how his caution and prudence which guided all his affairs were like a bulwark about her, and made the carrying out of her plans far easier than they would have been, nor how even now he was her defender.

"Thy house is well and wisely built," he said to Captain Rogers, "with strong walls and with fortifications. I will see to it that it is well supplied with ammunition, and in case there should be trouble with the natives it must be the refuge of those about. 'T is a plan I have long held in mind, as the houses spread farther apart, there must be certain ones appointed as refuge houses; there is need for one upon the St. George's and one at Mattapanient. As the settlement increases, these must be erected into hundreds, and captains appointed. Such thine must be, and we will appoint thee captain of this new hundred."

And Captain Rogers was well appeased. To have this authority, to have authority over Mistress Brent's affairs, to be able to summon her servants to muster when and where he would, to have in charge the garrisoning of her household and the inspection of it, though this was all for many a day, was a power dearly loved and duly exercised.

Seasons came and went. Mistress Brent was within her house, her orchards were planted, her corn lands bearing, her tobacco fields yielding bounteously; whatever a man of the colony dared, she ventured. There were hogs upon her marshes, cattle within her meadows, sheep on her pastures, and, hardest of all to procure, horses within her stables.

Twice had her venture of sweet-cured tobacco been shipped from the wharf before her doors, and again the long velvety leaves had grown their full length in the soft air of Maryland. It was a goodly crop, and the looking on it filled Mistress Margaret with joy as she rode by the border of the field, keeping her brown mare to a sedate walk.

The blackberry vines with leaves already spotted scarlet tore at her long skirt as she rode slowly along betwixt the forest's edge and the wide rolling field, the leaves of the sweet gum shone like a

flicker of flame against the forest's blackness; Mistress Brent drew rein, and slipped the riding mask from her face and looked with sparkling eyes about her. The dull-green stalks of tobacco waved to the orchard she had set behind her house, and the house itself shone fair as an Old World picture, set as it was in towering trees with the sparkle and glitter of the vast river breaking through the waving foliage, and behind her the great forest stood with wide spaces between the huge tree-trunks, inviting arcades of dusky coolness.

"Hi, Jock!" called Mistress Brent to one of the men working down the long rows, "come hither!" she turned carelessly in the saddle, as she waited him. "Art nearly done?"

"Aye, mistress," said the overseer, a heavy, stocky man, with long arms and broad, honest face; "but the suckers are toughened with the drought, 't is weary work tearing them away."

"But the work will be finished ere nightfall?" Jock looked about him with slow, stolid gaze.

"The men must work down the rows and back again many times ere all be done."

"Press them to it, Jock; thou knowest how to get the utmost limit from them. Promise them a pannikin of rum apiece and a serving of bacon for their suppers, an they be done. Good lack!

the tobacco looks fine, but it well may take an army of men to tend it."

"In faith, it does," said the overseer. "There are other crops might pay ye better."

"And is there not maize and wheat enow?" questioned Mistress Brent, quickly. It was ever one of the points of dispute between her and her overseer, whose stolid face hid a shrewd knowledge of farming, and whose stout frame held an equally stout heart, and one faithful to her interests withal.

But Jock, slow of speech, had ready no reply save the doubting look of his honest face.

Mistress Brent laughed lightly. "Jock," she began, presently, "hast heard aught of my sister's babe this day?"

The man shook his head.

Mistress Brent's gray eyes grew dark and thoughtful. She glanced along the length of the field to where the river shone.

"I fain would know; yet if I take boat and go thither I needs must take a man from the fields, and the work presses; the tide is low." She looked back in the dim woodland. Could she ride through its dusky recesses and find the creek, she would be on Captain Rogers's land and not far away from his dwelling. Yet she had never dared the ride.

Jock knew the quick humors of his mistress and read her puzzled look. "Ye will not venture," he began.

"Faith, that will I!" she laughed, as she struck her mare with the dogwood switch she had plucked and pulled her head straight to the great forest. "Tell Sarah I shall be back ere sundown, and promise the men their cheer," she called, as she left Jock, his blue eyes a-staring.

Down in the deep woodland the moist air, fragrant with the pungent odor of the hot pine, was deliciously refreshing; Mistress Margaret set a straight course and went riding gayly on.

"'T is like Maid Marion," she thought, lightly; "only Maid Marion went oft afoot, and — yes, there was ever Robin Hood to keep her company. But Maid Marion roamed no such beauteous woods as these, or roamed them as outlaw. And these are mine, upon mine own claim. A fool I've been to be scared by tales from the 'joyment of them. Pooh! where are the bears and panthers my cousin Calvert prated of so solemnly?" Mistress Brent knew not the forest creatures slept in their lairs at that hot hour. "Men set scarecrows everywhere to keep women within doors."

She drew a long breath of delight as she looked upward at the flickering sunlight on the tree-tops. A buzzard floated lazily high up in ether; she

could see the faint motion of his broad, black wing through the opening in the foliage. A squirrel chattered noisily at the breaking of his quiet; the land grew moist, and the underwood tangled with laurel and brier and dogwood. They neared the creek. Mistress Brent, lost in musing, was but dreamily conscious of the things about her. What was that cautious movement in the thick growth ahead, — the flash of a bird's wing? Nay, it was too slow and steady. She came with a shock of wild, sudden fear to a knowledge of it; it was an Indian crouching, steadily stealing to the point where her course would take her. She cut the mare wildly, pulled her sharply aside, and went crashing through bramble and brier and dogwood, till suddenly she was at the creek and fording it, though she clung fearfully, afraid even to look behind lest she should see a gleaming tomahawk or hear the whizz of an arrow.

But when her horse's hoofs were safe in Captain Rogers's field she was filled with an angry scorn of herself. "That I should have felt such cowardly fear, as though I had ne'er seen an Indian! Truth, they are oft about the settlements, but not at such seasons; and this one lurking here — tut!" she berated herself, but the shuddering recollection, the nervous horror, were upon her for many a day, though she was determined

there should be no mention of it to Captain Rogers.

"La! he would have the men out o' my tobacco fields ere sunset, and would be mustering and drilling and marching the forest while the maize went untended," and she set herself steady in the saddle as she neared his house.

She fastened the mask again upon her face and rode forward sedately, smiling, spite of the paroxysm of fear she had felt, as she pictured her brother-in-law's horror and framed the words she knew he would say.

The palisade gate was open and she rode within. The heat rose in heavy shimmers over the hard, bare earth, where no tree gave shade from the blazing sun; stables and quarters were huddled close about the house, and the flies swarmed thickly about the open doors.

"Good Lord!" groaned Mistress Margaret, as she slipped lightly from her horse. She went into the narrow hall: it was deserted, whips and guns littered the rack of wooden pegs stuck in the wall, a saddle was thrown carelessly on the floor. There was no one in the living-room. She opened the door to the back. There sat Mary half asleep, her babe, burning with fever, upon her knee.

"Margaret," she cried, a thrill of relief in her voice, "I begged Henry e'en now to send for thee!"

Her sister raised the tiny hot form in her supple arms ere she answered her.

"Has he been long thus?" she asked, anxiously.

"The fever has but shortly come upon him."

"The prevailing sickness?" questioned Mistress Margaret.

Mary nodded. "Yet Henry did consider this place so secure; there are no marshes near and the wide, salt water is in front."

Margaret laid her free hand on her sister's shoulder, which had grown softer and plumper with each year of matrimony, until Mary's maiden roundness, in sooth, bloomed somewhat too full for beauty.

"Lie down; give me thy chair!" she insisted. "I can hold him better, thus. See, he grows more quiet already; thy arms were too wearied to hold him. Where is thy maid?"

"He will let none touch him save me."

"Faith, he takes to me kindly enow!" said Margaret, cheerily.

"But thou hadst ever a wondrous gift with children, Madge."

Mistress Margaret flushed. Rarer and rarer came any such affectionate speech as this from her sister, who made all the opinions of her husband hers, and held toward her sister a half-irritated, half-querulous manner.

"Thou wilt have to give me one of them some day."

"Now, Margaret, why canst thou not be sensible? To live alone —"

"Tut! commence not such old themes; rest thy brain," said Margaret, impatiently, "the child sleeps."

Mary pushed the hot pillow under her head petulantly.

"'T was but yesterday Henry said —"

"Aye, sweet, thy husband hath many words of wisdom; tell me of the children. Where is Rosalind?"

"Playing somewhere about."

"I saw her not."

"She is in the servants' quarters, belike; 't is cooler within doors."

The sisters fell into talk of household matters, talk which soothed Mistress Mary more than sleep would have done, for her mind was wearied with old thoughts and her brain was tired with dreaming old dreams; and Mistress Margaret was fresh as a breath of north wind in sultry weather. The shadow of the house for whose coolness the mother had sought the back room grew longer across the bare yard, the flies buzzed sleepily, and Mistress Margaret brushed them now and then from the hot face of the babe on her knee. Summer

drowsiness brooded all about, and in the bare room with its scant furnishings and rough walls. Captain Rogers scorned luxuriousness, and used the wealth which had come into his hands with his marriage for many ventures, trusting to make himself a power within the province.

The soft curls about the baby's head grew damp, his cheek less scorching hot.

"The fever breaks," said Mistress Margaret, thankfully; "shall I lay him beside thee? Ye both might sleep, and—what—"

Mistress Brent listened eagerly.

"What is it, Mary?"

"'T is Henry and—is not that the voice of Giles?"

"Giles! he is in Kent Isle."

"'T is his voice," declared the younger sister. "Nay, go not yet, tarry while I have time to tidy my dress; he must not see me thus." Mary rose hastily, pushed back her fair hair and began to search feverishly within the closet for a gown she deemed suitable.

"Thou hast not a garment fit to wear," declared Mistress Margaret, as she noted the tumbled look of each.

"An thou hadst two babes to tumble 'bout thee!"

"There is never any reason why a woman should

not look her best." She laid the baby on the bed and turned with quick whispers. "Here, robe thyself!" she wound her long riding-skirt upon her arm as she took the sprigged linen from its peg and slipped the full skirt over her sister's head. "La! it lacks fair an inch of fastening."

Mary's face grew red and fretful as she squeezed herself into it.

"Nay, I would not fret myself; 't is hot — our brother — true, Giles is the biggest dandy within the province. Here he comes with thy husband." Mistress Margaret withdrew into the farthest corner of the room where Mary diligently fastened her bodice, and waited expectant, a light of amusement in her dark eyes.

"How fresh he looks, and I trow he hath but this moment landed; but he should have been first to St. Mary's, and methinks I would have known of that. Thou hast no lace so rare as that which shrouds his wrists, hot as it is, nor no silk so fine, save 't is thy wedding gown, as that of his summer doublet. Not a curl upon his forehead seems out of place." She turned laughingly to Mary; "'t is not fitting," she added, mischievously, "'t is not fitting the man of our family should go braver than we."

"Braver," said Mary, crossly; "thou art ever bedecked enow."

The men were still in earnest converse in the shadowed yard.

"An they take much longer, Mary, thou wilt have full time."

"I am already dressed," declared Mary as she picked up a leaden-framed mirror which lay on the top of her chest of drawers and looked at herself complacently. So many days had gone since she had seen herself well gowned, she felt a wondering pleasure at the cool stiffness of her dress.

"Here they come!" Margaret slipped behind and gave Mary a little forward push as Giles came with formal greeting even to his sisters.

"Mistress Mary, our fair sister!" Giles was newly made Commander of Kent, and spoke as though he were a potentate. He kissed her lightly on the cheek and then started as he saw behind her the lithe figure of his older sister, her face a-quiver with merriment.

"Giles," she declared, as she gave him her fingers carelessly, "we looked not for thee so soon; what grave matters have brought thee hither?"

"Graver than thou thinkest," began Giles, but Mistress Brent herself must bear some questionings.

Captain Rogers's stern eye had noted her riding-dress and the mask upon the bed ere he greeted her; he knew, also, no boat of hers lay at his

wharf. "How camest thou hither?" he demanded soon as he welcomed her.

"An it please your lordship," she began demurely, "I rode."

Rogers's dark eyes flashed as he looked meaningly at Giles, and Mistress Margaret, angered at the look, added haughtily:

"Brown Bess is in thy stables, and, now I have seen the babe and he is better, will take me home again."

"Through the forest?"

Mistress Margaret hesitated a moment, and a faint red rose in her cheeks beneath the men's questioning gaze.

"Mayhap there are limits e'en to thy daring," said Captain Rogers; and his jeering tone stung Mistress Margaret to the quick.

"An thou thinkest it daring to ride through the forest," she began passionately.

"Nay, sister, there are reasons," said Giles, gently, — "reasons more than ever why thou shouldst not so venture."

"Reasons!"

"Aye, there is much disquiet amongst the Indians to the north."

"But not here."

"'T is said they make league with the Nanticokes and nearer tribes, and there is grave danger

of an uprising such as they made in the Virginia colony."

Mistress Brent fingered the folds of her riding-habit nervously, but there was no word of the lurking spy she had come upon. Whether she thought the matter too slight, or whether she feared the interference of the captain of the hundred in her affairs when she wanted him not, she was silent.

But Giles, while he quarrelled often with his sister over what he termed her lack of maidenliness, was yet proud of her beauty and her power, and would hear no word of others against her. He noted her discomfiture.

"I did purpose to stop at thy manor," he began, "and will take thee hither now; our brother will send thy mare safe home."

"Giles," cried his sister, angered at her brother-in-law's cold looks and words, "send one of thy men with her and we will sail homeward in thy pinnace." She followed him in the hall and laid her fingers lightly on his silken sleeve. "See that he be well armed," she whispered as she pressed his arm warningly, "and caution him that no harm come to the horse."

"Art ready?" she questioned when Giles came back from his errand.

"Ready!" cried Captain Rogers, "surely he tarries with us."

Mistress Margaret was silent.

"I did purpose also to see my sister."

"Thou hast seen her here. I must talk with thee further concerning the information thou hast brought."

"I have already told thee all I know. The governor must be informed."

"Then ye will hasten to St. Mary's?"

"Faith," said Giles, assuming his most lackadaisical air, "I know not; it grows late, mayhap I shall tarry for the night with her."

Captain Rogers's face hardened with anger, which Giles was quick to read.

"Methinks thou wouldst understand that there is need!" he said, emphasizing his words. "Thou hast thy fortified house."

The captain's eyes struck sudden fire. At last the danger he had so often prated on had come.

"And when I have had counsel with the governor we will speedily send thee instructions; till then 't is best that thou shouldst tarry here and see to thy charge, else would I urge thy going to St. Mary's also."

Captain Rogers was satisfied. He went with them to the wharf, his wife by his side, and watched the white sails of the pinnace as they bent to the evening breeze; he had even a word of praise for his wife in her fine gown, and Mary,

who had begun to feel the trouble of her toilet ill spent, was well pleased, and faintly wished there was more time for gay dressing. Yet the babes — she hurried to them now. The boy had wakened exhausted from his fever and fretted for his mother.

On the pinnace Mistress Margaret was saying petulantly to her brother, "I would not owe him anything, even the sending of Brown Bess home."

"Thou art unjust."

"Tut! thou hast not to live with him for neighbor and listen to his constant carpings. He never comes within my house save to find some fault, — the maize is not well tended; Jock looks not well to the curing of the tobacco, and yet we shipped more last year than he," she added, slyly.

Giles laughed. "Aye," he cried, as he caught the tip of her small, pink ear, "there's the rub. Thou art dainty enow for naught but loving, and yet, sometimes, methinks thou art the best man of us all," he added, with unwonted gravity.

"Now, Giles, thou art turning me to ridicule. Thou knowest Jock is the best farmer in the province. Faith! he hath a seventh sense as to winds and weathers, and Sarah is the best housekeeper."

"'T is the acme of wisdom to know how to choose good servants," said Giles, sententiously.

"And then to trust them. Though I believe, after all, most of the affairs are under my oversight."

"I 'll warrant me!"

"But of thy own affairs, Giles. I have not seen thee since thou wast made Commander of Kent."

"South Fort Manor is as well laid off as thine own."

"'T was Claiborne's home," said Mistress Margaret, quickly.

"When he was on the island."

"And had not our cousin Evelin so stripped it—" Mistress Margaret looked quickly around to see if any heard her; they might criticise the failings of the government, but not when other ears might listen, and these Kentish troubles were the sorest of the colony. Evelin in his brief commandery of the island had shamefully looted the home of Claiborne for the benefiting of his own new manor of Evelinton upon the Potomac. Thither had he brought the furnishings of the dwelling at South Fort, and had even removed the new-set orchard to his own fields. But spite of this material advantage he reaped little reward. Evelin was hated beyond all men in Kent, and little thought of in St. Mary's.

South Fort Manor, when Kent had been well subjugated and brought under the sway of St.

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Mary's, had been bestowed on Leonard Calvert by the proprietor; but he, thinking little on the widening of his possessions, had given it in turn to Giles Brent, making him likewise commander of the isle.

"'T was sparsely furnished, I can tell thee," declared Giles, talking of his new home; "yet the site is fair and the soil fertile; the isle is the very gem of the bay. My Lord Baltimore hath been most wise to insist on its submission."

"'T would ever have been a thorn in his side, and yet methinks Claiborne had good cause for his claim."

Giles shrugged his shapely shoulders; Claiborne's cause worried him not.

"Zounds! 't is well for me 't is so!"

"Thou hast no cause for plaint," said Mistress Margaret; "thou hast reaped the fruits of his labor."

Giles looked down and smoothed the ruffles on his wrist.

"But rightfully," he declared.

"Rightfully enow."

They were seated far up in the bow of the pinnace to catch the cool breezes which blew fitfully down the river.

On either side the haze of eventide dimmed the shore, the river's breast was ruffled with the in-

coming tide and the evening wind, the flap of the sail and the swishing of cleft water against the pinnace's prow made a soft murmur that filled the pauses of their talk.

On the blue water were wide, smooth swathes like tortuous pathways on the waves. Mistress Brent traced the silvery course of them, idly turning to follow the shining ways. Her own wharf was in sight.

"Giles," she exclaimed, "there is a strange vessel at my wharf; 'tis — 'tis the governor's pinnace."

VII

IT was the governor's pinnace. As they neared the wharf they could see him coming from the house to meet them, walking leisurely in the shade of the great oaks, and then his tall figure looming against the bluff as he came down the stairway built in the clay and leading down to the beach.

"He hath come himself," said Margaret, with a sigh of satisfaction, not noting that her brother's gaze dwelt upon her flushed face keenly.

"Cometh he often?" Giles queried, carelessly.

"Nay, the governor hath ever weighty affairs, and takes them somewhat seriously, as thou knowest. Yet he must ever have the manors under his eye." She spoke disjointedly, as the men brought the boat about and they neared the wharf. "Yet 't is a pleasure ever to have him with us; he is at ease."

"Relaxes from his cares," said Giles, with a touch of sarcasm in his voice.

"As if e'en thine own were not overpowering thee," declared his sister, hotly. "Faith, when I saw thee greeting Mary —"

Giles laughed, though the shaft went home. He leaped up on the wharf. "A happy meeting!" he exclaimed as he bent low before the governor. "I am but now bound to St. Mary's."

"And Mistress Brent's is fair tarrying ground." The governor turned to hand his hostess from the vessel, and eyed, surprised, the long folds of her habit.

"I had but ridden to my sister's," began Mistress Margaret airily, "when my brother came hither, and as he was bound to our manor —"

The governor's countenance changed somewhat, though he made no comment on her speech, but turned to Brent. "I have but despatched a messenger to thee."

"In sooth! and I sought thee with news."

"Thou art haply met;" he bowed gravely as he offered his hand to Mistress Brent and led her up the stairway in the bluff.

"Truth, we are glad to see you, Cousin Calvert; these summer days grow tedious with no talk save that of Jock about his crops and Sarah's of her housewifery. One grows aweary."

"There is not a line of weariness in thy face and not a note of weariness in thy voice."

"An thou readest faces and voices —"

"'T is the truest of all languages, words —"

"Are but to conceal one's thoughts," said Giles,

as he walked up the gravelled pathway behind them.

"Is that thy way?" flashed his sister; "now I'll know —"

"Judge me not, prithee."

"Come," laughed Mistress Brent, "I'll leave our cousin Calvert to your word cutting while I don a thinner gown. The coolest spot upon the manor is within this hall." She opened a door at the side of the hall and was gone.

Sarah, robust and red, and round-eyed at the thought of guests, waited her in her chamber.

"My cousin Calvert and my brother are come hither," said Mistress Margaret, carelessly; "look to thy supper."

"There are cold capons and pasties of venison," began Sarah, eagerly.

"Nay," cried Mistress Brent, "I am not the housekeeper, I leave that to thee. Send Lucy hither, I am grimed with the dust of the fields and splashed with salt."

Mistress Brent went about her toilet, a song upon her lips. Each piece of dust and heat stained clothing must be laid aside; linen soft and lavender-scented must be put on, silken hose and buckled slippers donned; neck and shoulders must be bathed in scented waters, and the dark hair coiled high and set with golden daggers.

"Bring the coolest gown within my wardrobe," she commanded Lucy, who brought a thin filmy tissue which was neither gray nor green nor white, but shimmered of all alike; and Mistress Brent looked at herself eagerly as she donned it, and if her eyes brightened with pleasure at the vision she saw there it was but a tithe of the sparkle she saw in the governor's eyes when she went out in the hall.

How it rested him to be here, in this cool, dark-raftered and dark-hung hall, with the shifting shadows of great trees outside and the hazy shine of the misty river beyond! Had he told it to himself, did he know that in all new cares the first advice he sought was that of my lady of St. Anne's manor? did he know he valued her word beyond that of his council? or did he think it was the comfort and the rest of a life so far different from that of many of the colonists, that it was but the enjoyment of a fair hostess and the luxury which she managed to keep about her spite of the raw, new land in which she lived? It was the last of these he thought on in their light talk and through their sumptuous meal; but afterward, when the dusk lay thick beneath the oaks, and the nearness of the river would scarce be known save for the languid wash of the tide along the shore, he fell into talk of the

colony's affairs, as in truth he had come to do. There was a step to which he must persuade, aye, even command, this wilful cousin of his.

"Hast heard the tidings Giles brought us?" he at last asked abruptly, breaking a silence which had fallen upon them.

"Was it of the Indian?" questioned Mistress Brent, quickly.

"Of the Indian, and of the gravest import."

"There are rumors," broke in Giles quickly, — "there are rumors in Kent of a vast conspiracy amongst the tribes from the Susquehannocks to the Matopeakes and Nanticokes."

"But the Nanticokes are ever peaceable."

"Not with some devil to stir them up."

Mistress Brent turned to Calvert. "Is this thy first tidings?" she asked.

"There hath been trouble brewing for many days, yet I trusted. I have had the traders note them carefully; there is mischief afoot, yet I trusted alway to dwell in friendship with them."

"Are they not friendly? What reasons hast thou, Giles, for not thinking this tale one of many idle rumors?"

"Idle rumors!" cried Giles indignant. "Margaret, thou passest the bounds of sense! Would such bring me hither in hot haste? Tales! have I become —"

"Peace, I pray thee!"

"We in Kent are the most exposed of all the colonists," went on Giles, as though he presented the matter to an Assembly; "should danger fall upon the province 't will strike us first."

"Methinks not," said his sister, quickly.

"'T will strike us first there." Giles drew his slender figure straight in his chair. "The Susquehannocks are not far to the north of us, and the peninsula 'twixt the bay and ocean swarms with savages. The Susquehannocks war with tribes to the north of them. They have been worsted. They fear extermination, as hath befallen many a tribe, and they have striven in great secrecy to make a league against the white man; 'twixt their enemies to the north and the English settlements they are held too closely. They have been well nigh successful. Even the Matopeakes, who have dwelt so peaceably in the settlement in the isle of Kent, grow strange and sullen. They meditate some great and awful danger to the colony."

"Then," said Calvert, as though he had been for some time deciding on the wisest step, but now saw his way, "then we will not give them chance. I had hoped never to take offensive move against them, but to dwell in Christian amity; but I will not sit still and see my people

butchered. There must be no Virginian tale with us. An there be war, 't is we who strike the first blow. I 'll blast this confederacy ere it has time — " He had spoken far more rapidly than his wont, and he broke off abruptly, " What thinkest thou, Mistress Brent? "

Mistress Brent sat, her hands tight clenched, a shadow on her face.

" What would ye do? " she asked.

" Send a force against them."

" Against whom? "

" The Susquehannocks ; their force once broken, we are secure."

" Aye," said Mistress Margaret, speaking low ; " they tell strange tales of their prowess."

" Their cruelty," corrected Giles.

" Who will command the expedition? "

" Cornwallis is most valiant and well skilled."

" But not a man of Kent will serve under him."

" We need them not."

And then they fell into talk of the colony's affairs. Of the meeting of the Assembly in the spring, and the power at last granted the colonists to frame their own laws, the Proprietor retaining the power of veto; of my Lord of Baltimore's letters, which had grown strangely short and troubled; of the news of England and the terrible

rebellion which had broken out there, and which, they felt assured, would soon be ended.

Times were troublous, — more so than in all the colony's history. Their talk was long and serious. The night settled upon them; winds rose and sighed in the tree-tops; the tide turned and came, rushing loud and sibilant, shorewards; fireflies flashed over lawn and field and marsh; and the whip-poor-wills called their shrill plaint.

Giles lingered in the doorway and then went slowly down the gravelled path to the stairway in the bluff. There was something witching in the August night. And as he loitered, Calvert had time for the words of caution he had come to speak to Mistress Brent.

"Cousin Margaret," he began, with such a tinge of affection in his tone that Mistress Margaret started. There had been no word of aught save friendship from him since that fateful day four years ago. "Cousin Margaret, all that Giles hath told us I knew already. Mine eyes have been upon this trouble many days. 'T was that which brought me to thee. *'T is no longer safe to dwell at St. Anne's.*"

Mistress Brent fair gasped her astonishment.

"I have not warned thee a day too soon," he went on impressively, "nor a day too late." He

spoke as though he prided himself upon his oversight, as in truth he did. "I knew thy spirit; I knew the state of thy farm lands: thou wouldst not leave them as they stand ready for the harvest were not danger at thy very door. Yet now it is in very truth.

"Thou must go, thou and thy household, to thy brother Rogers's on the morrow."

"Beshrew me —"

"Wait till thou hast heard the end. This day ere I set sail from St. Mary's I did send messengers through all the hundreds, that they should betake them to their houses of refuge. So I have already told thy brother; but — I warned him to leave me the telling thee. To-morrow I see Captain Rogers, he must have his full complement of soldiers from each household."

"Cousin Calvert!" began Mistress Margaret slowly, though her face had paled somewhat from this recital of a decisive danger she had thought as remote as the stars above them, "we are safe here, believe me."

"Safe!"

"I have ten serving-men, stout and true; how many households, bethink you, have more?"

"But —"

"Nay, I have listened to thee, listen now to me. Should this danger come upon us, who would

suffer, those in the town or those safe housed in refuge-houses? nay, the outlying plantations —"

"Thou hast voiced the very danger I am come to warn ye of."

"The destruction of houses, of cattle, of crops, I could ill stand it."

"Nor could any, yet 't is one of the chances all of us must face," said the governor, grimly.

"Yet would I take my chances guarding mine own, not fleeing like —"

"Mistress Brent, thou speakest with more of woman's folly than I had ever thought —"

"Is it woman's folly to guard the stakes on which are thrown one's very life, or man's wisdom?"

"My cousin," said the governor, gravely and coldly, "thou hadst ever the gift of speech; I bandy not words with thee."

"Nor do I!" cried his cousin, hotly. "I ask thee a question fairly, where is there a man in thy province who, having staked so deeply, — nay, staked his all, for so I have done; Giles hath been more careful, and Mary, Captain Rogers holds her wealth fast; but I have ventured all, all. Where is there one who, venturing thus, would turn coward at the first breath of danger?"

Calvert rose to his great height and walked uneasily down the dusky hall.

"Cousin," he said, as he came again within the

circle of candle-light, "'t is not a question of house and lands, but of life."

"Life! what care I? What is life coupled with a woman's dependence?"

"A woman's dependence," repeated the governor, as though the words cut him to the heart.

"In Captain Rogers's household, think o' the life I'd lead." She laughed scornfully.

"Is that the only household open to thee?"

"Or Giles's," she faltered, her gaze fastened on her tight-clenched hands, where the fingers were folded fast upon her thumbs, as is the manner of people much wrought upon.

The governor came closer. There sat the woman he loved far deeper than he had known when he told her of it, in a tremor of womanly fear, and his heart ached to comfort her, to fold his arms about her and whisper there was an empty household, forever empty an her own dear form dwelt not there; why should she not be the head of the governor's household, the first woman of the colony? He wondered why, sometimes, ambitious as she was, she had not weighed this side of it, and then loathed himself for thinking on it. He would drive no woman, even though, as now, she was silent before him, the fairest creature God had made, and winsome past all speaking on it. Yet he held his peace, though truly the

look on his face spoke for him as, moved by the magnetism of his gaze, she lifted her eyes till she looked full upon him, for the space of a breath.

She sprang to her feet, and Calvert noted even in that moment how the candle-light fell upon her fair neck and soft, round arms and supple wrists.

"Cousin," she cried, as she picked up the candlestick, "come with me!"

She led the way into the living-room, and to a secretary that loomed tall and black in the dusk. "Here I keep some rude account of my affairs. An thou carest to see it, every pound I have is at venture."

"What have I to do with thine accounts?" began the governor almost rudely, angered at such speech.

"I did but think—"

"Could I not trust thy word?"

Mistress Brent bit her red lip. "Then come with me; thou knowest the structure of our dwelling;" she walked nervously to the window,—"thick logs, clapboarded without and tapestry hung within, the windows heavy battened with great oaken bars for fastenings. 'T is not so flimsy as it looks!"

Calvert followed her, as eagerly she besought his attention for wall and window and doorway.

"'T is strong as Captain Rogers's, and as for

supplies of powder and ammunition, faith! he would not allow me to be an ounce too short or a gun missing at the cost of his manor. Yet," her voice took on a tinge of irony, "I do double all his requirements, though I would not have him know it, not for — not for — Truth, I am telling thee many confidences," she went on brightly, gathering bravery from his silence.

"But ye could not defend yourselves here."

"In faith, why not? Because I am a woman! Can I not call my men within, can I not gather my household in my house and stand or fall?"

"Or *fall!*"

"And if I fall, there's an end of it."

"'T is time," exclaimed the governor impatiently, "ye made an end of such madness; were there a man within the colony who so resisted my authority — "

"Authority! I tell ye to your face, an ye command me to leave and I lose, aye, e'en one shock of corn, I 'll hold the government of Maryland responsible."

"Od's life! think ye the head of each household will do so when the proclamation hath gone forth? Then were the government bankrupt indeed. Nay, Margaret, where is thy woman's wit? Think on thy foolishness and how thou hast put me to it, e'en to hard words with thee."

Mistress Margaret stood as though, at last, thwarted and overcome.

"Cousin, an the savages were upon us and we made a brave stand, they might be driven off or held at bay till we could get help, but did we flee, and did they come upon the plantation, the demon of destruction which doth possess them would leave naught to tempt me again to my manor. In which case I sail to England, and take refuge in my Lord of Baltimore's household."

She raised a warning hand as Calvert began to speak. "'T is what he did urge ere I sailed, and what he asked in my wealth he is too noble to refuse should I be come to poverty."

Calvert for the nonce was speechless with perplexity, and Mistress Brent was silent, leaning against the deep window-frame, though her troubled eyes saw naught of the peaceful night without.

Presently she took up the thread of talk. "When we were a-building," she went on as one who tells a tale and tells it from the beginning, "when we were a-building, we hit upon a strange discovery. Where the river curves close to the house and the bluff is high and bold," — she broke off abruptly as though her speech were not yet direct, — "there is a cave there, large enow to hold twoscore men, mayhap more. Jock

found it, how, I know not. Sassafras and sumac and brier clothe the sloping side and hide its entrance. 'T was a scant fifty yards to the house. Jock, who hath had good knowledge in the wars with my father, well knew how to dig a passage from it to my cellars. We have there a sure refuge. Yet have I kept it most secret. Were it blazoned abroad, 't would be no longer a refuge. A boat is ever near should we be forced to flee —"

"Show me this secret passage and cave," commanded Calvert, shortly.

Mistress Brent picked up the candlestick and moved silently down the wide hall, past the stairway, to a door behind it. She opened it and went down a narrow stair. The air of the cellar was close and damp, coming, as they did, from the fresh night air. She placed her hand lightly on his arm and guided him across the low room. "Pull these casks aside," she commanded, "they are empty — so! Thou wilt have to stoop low."

Mistress Brent gathered her silken skirts about her.

"Stay," said the governor, "I will get a light; there is no need for thee to 'company me."

"Yet will I go," she declared stoutly, as she bent her head and entered the narrow passage. "Bend low for the first few yards," she cautioned;

"ye will find a good six feet beyond, though I doubt me if that be enough for thy height."

She shivered at the darkness and dreariness; cobwebs brushed against her head, beetles and frogs and things of the earth and of the dark went scurrying out of their way, the high golden dagger set in her hair caught in the clay overhead and sent it showering on her bare shoulders, but she set her lips tightly and went on.

"Zounds!" cried Calvert, "'t is enough to try the strongest. A gruesome refuge, yet safe if no one know the secret," he added when they stood in the cave, "and the lawn shows not a hint of it. A man at either entrance might hold this 'gainst a hundred. Why hast thou not told me sooner?" he reproached.

"A woman tells not everything," cried Mistress Brent.

"Hadst no mercy on me and the anxious moments I spent thinking on thee," he caught his breath sharply. "I pray God few women know so well how to rend a man's heart."

"Cousin," pleaded Margaret, a sound of tears in her voice.

"Aye, there hath been many a wild night I dared not sleep for thinking on thee, what perils might not lodge about thee; had I dared, I'd have wrested thee from them by every power in brute

force. It hath cost a hundred times the struggle to bide still and let thee have thy way!"

Mistress Margaret, shaken to the core, had no word for this passionate protest but, what she would have scorned hitherto, to lay her hand upon his arm, and then to bend her soft cheek against it.

The governor caught his breath sharply, and his hand shook so that the candle he had taken from her flickered violently, and then, caught in a fitful draught which sucked through the cave from the foliage-hidden entrance, went suddenly out.

He caught his cousin by the wrist while he searched for some gleam of outside light. "Aye, here;" he led her a few steps, then stooped and parted the thick branches as they made their way out, and pushed them carefully back again.

They stood on the beach, the stars were thick overhead and the murmur of the incoming tide rose like a song, strong, insistent.

Calvert spoke quickly. He had been dangerously near words it was no fitting time to say, if that time should ever be. "Cousin, thou hast my consent. I will tell Captain Rogers of it. Bide ye here. Should there be danger, invasion, ye can well defend yourselves till succor could be given. But see thou hast ammunition in thy

secret place of refuge, and that there are ever boats near for flight, should ye have to take to the river."

"I thank thee," said Mistress Brent; and though the way upon the beach was smooth and firm, she laid her hand upon his arm. "And thou dost not think me fitful, capricious? In truth, all I have of interest in life is upon this manor, else—" She broke off with a sigh. "Mayhap 't is that makes chief difference 'twixt us, men and women. A man has many interests, a woman oft but one. Men would have it that one interest is always of the heart. History showeth many not so;" she, too, spoke as if to tide over anxious thoughts, and Calvert seconded her.

"Mayhap 't is true," he said, lightly.

"There are many such—"

They had come to the foot of the clay-embedded stair, and Giles, his elbow on his knee, rested still upon it, looking dreamily on the starlit river, dreaming visions far tenderer than one looking on him might have thought.

He started violently at the figures on the beach. "'Fore God," he cried, "I thought ye ghosts; whence came ye?"

"An thou dost fancy thy humor only is for starlit rambles?" began the governor.

"Nay, I lay no solitary claim upon such madness."

Mistress Brent seated herself upon the steps. "'T is a night for lingering outside," she declared; "'t is yet hot within the house." She took the candlestick from her cousin's hand and put it upon the step behind her. "Thou wilt join us," she said, looking up at him and pulling her skirts close that he might seat himself anear.

Giles wondered at the governor's gay humor that night. His wonder grew to amazement when on the morrow he heard he had consented to his sister's hardihood of biding still on her estates, and then fell to idle thinking as, on taking his way down to his pinnace, his eye lighted on a candlestick thrust in a corner of the stair.

VIII

THERE had been one further question from the governor concerning his cousin's affairs. "Were there none from St. Mary's she would have bide with her till the trouble blew over?"

And Mistress Brent, looking demurely at the gray planks of the wharf whence she had come to watch their sailing, had answered, "Yea, Mistress Hawley."

"Mistress Hawley!" exclaimed Giles angrily, for his humor had been peevish since he had heard this foolhardy decision; "an thou art not satisfied with thine own danger but must bring her," he choked, as if too impatient for speech.

"Truly, Giles," began his sister, with brows uplifted, "thy interest for Mistress Hawley waxes warm; 't was but—" she stopped astounded, a sudden tide of red was flushing Giles's tanned face. "Ha!" she continued, remorselessly, "sets the tide that way? faith, she is older—" Margaret in her astonishment was speaking rude truths.

"But a year."

"Sooth, that is true, and yet she is so calm, so self-contained."

Giles turned away impatiently.

"I but thought how comforting 't would be to see her," cried Margaret, as she turned protestingly to the governor, who listened with quizzical look upon his fair face. "She always visits the manor this time o' the year. Whatever we have of fruit is hers. She prepares much of her winter stores. We owe her enough, in conscience' sake, and she would never allow a reckoning."

"Thou hast fair made it up, I ween."

"And I must make my peace now with Giles." She went to the pinnace side and stood talking to her brother while the men pulled on the creaking sails and gave them to the wind, and then she watched the white sails bend away to St. Mary's.

A feeling of loneliness fell upon her as she turned toward the house. Out on the river the silvery mists still hung, making of the opposite shore a shimmering fairy-land; the dew lay thick upon the long grass beneath the oaks, and the morning wind blew freshly through the hall. Face to face with the necessity for firm action and quick decision, she was yet beset with a nervous, petulant mood. She had had her way, and now she knew scarce how to take it.

The men were already abroad, she must stir them to action.

She hurried to the field. "Jock," she commanded when she had called the overseer to her, "work the men hard as thou darest, bind the bundles of fodder and throw them in the furrows, and let them be collected within the barn ere sunset. I know — but there is danger abroad — " she went on nervously to tell the tidings she felt he should know.

But Jock on hearing them set himself sturdily against most of her plans. She would have the maize housed even if not yet cured, she would have the tobacco cut, the cattle driven in from the meadows and the hogs from the marshes far up the creek, and then, with all her produce thus gathered together, she would make stand against danger.

Jock was far too good a soldier to counsel such doings. "Send warnings to the men who tended the swine and cattle; let them take refuge at the manor-house," he begged her; "leave the tobacco uncut and the maize unhoused, better the loss from trampling should the savages indeed come upon them, — and God wot I hope 't will be a wild alarm, there are ever many such in times of danger, — than to have them burned within their sheltering."

And Mistress Brent heeded, though the fever

of work coming upon her, she toiled the livelong summer day.

As the day went on, the heat waxed so great, so lowering, that action became more and more difficult. The leaves of the oaks outside hung limp and lifeless in the scorching air, the horizon thickened from the clear blue of many days, a sickly grayish hue grew upon the sky, yet there were no mutterings of the storm till sunset. Then such a howling fury of wind and rain and hail broke over them as those of St. Anne's Manor never had seen, — gusts of wind which were icy cold; merciless hail which beat down all before it; rain which slashed like hail and ran like rivers down the sharp slopes of the roof, over lawn and gravelled pathway; crashing thunder which shook the house about them, and lightning which fairly scorched the face of nature with its blaze. The heart of the storm passed over them and went howling down the bay, yet its mutterings could be heard, and wind and rain still beat about them.

It turned wintry cold.

"In the name of Our Lady," pleaded Mistress Brent, when, its first fury past, she moved from the dark hall where she had taken refuge with her women about her, "I am fair perishing with cold; canst light me a fire, Sarah?"

But Sarah was scared past moving, and but stared, round-eyed, at her mistress.

"An thou sittest like any graven image," began Mistress Brent, angrily, — her nerves were sorely tried by the tempest, — "rouse thee!" she shook Sarah's plump shoulders; "the storm is gone."

As though in mockery of her speech, through every crevice of window and door licked the pale, fierce lightning, and the thunder crashed and rolled overhead and boomed more sullen, far away.

"It hath passed already far down the bay; come! I am perishing with cold; then, sit here!" She seized the candle from the table. "Lucy, look within the chamber, is there aught for lighting a fire?"

"Naught," mumbled Lucy, shuddering by her side; "yesterday I did clean the hearth anew and fill it with fresh pine boughs."

"Find me my cloak, the scarlet sarcenet." She held the candle while Lucy sank on her trembling knees beside the oaken chest. "Toss not the clothing about in such fashion. There!" as the maid pulled out the crimson folds of the wrap and fastened it with shaking fingers about Mistress Margaret's bare neck.

"Why, thou art as cold." She caught the rough hand for a moment in her grasp. "Get thee to bed, girl, thou art as frightened as though the

Indian were upon thee; but stay!" She went to the battened window and through the peep-hole at its side strove to get some view outside, but inky blackness wrapped them about.

"I must wait for a flash from the storm. Aye, there it is, and all is peaceful though storm-swept."

She unfastened the window and flung it wide. "Jock, Jock!" The door of the cabin in which the men slept was opened; "knowest thou if the storm hath struck anywhere about?"

"None of the housings; there is no danger I can tell of till the morning."

"Then get thee to bed;" she slammed the shutter and slipped the heavy bar behind it in its sockets. "And Lucy, thou, too," she added kindly; "rouse Sarah and take her with thee. I will tend myself. Though were Sarah not so fear distraught — faith! 't is lonely as the dead," she told herself as footsteps and voices died away in the attic, "and as awesome." She caught her breath sharply as the lightning glare flickered pale and white through every crevice in the heavy door.

"And what to do — would I had kept these silly women for company, and yet they were so sick with fear it did weaken me to look on them."

She wandered, candle in hand, through cham-

ber and hall and living-room, all the extent of her dwelling; felt with cold, nervous fingers the fastenings of every door and shutter, and came again to the hall, where she had sought refuge when the storm broke upon them.

The massive table was covered with a rich carpet. She noted every coloring of its pattern as though she had never seen it before, and followed with trembling finger-tips the Eastern tracery of its palms. Her own great chair was drawn beside the table, and she sank into it, drawing her cloak closely about her thin-clad figure and bared neck and arms.

For the first time since she had been lady of St. Anne's Manor the heart within her trembled with fear. The wind which swept along the floor, and struck her slippered feet to icy cold, set the tapestry upon the walls waving as if with unseen hands; the antler points above the doorway of the living-room caught the flickering candle-light and shone as sinister as though they clothed the front of some awful foe; and the darkness in the rafters overhead seemed throbbing in unison with the palpitations of her heart.

A surge of fear and loneliness and longing swept over her. Useless to fight against it. None could see her weakness. She buried her face in the rich carpet on the table and wept

like the child she longed, for one wild moment, to be, while rain and wind beat and shook the house and crashed in the great branches of the oaks outside, and thunder muttered low, and the pale lightning quivered over land and river.

So fierce a storm as had lately raged about them shook Mistress Margaret's heart. With fear fresh upon her she thought on all the lonely hours she had spent since, spite of her cousin's pleadings, she had taken her way and cleared the lands of St. Anne's Manor.

She thought of the first days of her venture, when there was naught but eager planning for the day and heavy rest for the night; and then, the first flush of novelty gone, of weary moments she had begun already to fight; of winter storms that beat upon them and heavy days that shut her in, and of times that took her fiercely when heart strove against her will. It was not worth all this, her whim! Was anything worth effort? Would she not tire of all her hands could grasp?

Sick at heart, she strove with herself, while the storm died away and the candle flickered low in its socket. She turned her head wearily on her arm. The candle was at its last gasp. She rose, gathered candles from chamber and living-room and lighted them all upon the table.

"I'll have no more hobgoblins in the dark,"

she told herself. And then gathering her cloak about her she began to walk to and fro, to and fro, in the gusty hall where the tapestry still waved along the wall.

But now no childish fear possessed her. That weakness had shown her something far more awesome lurking in her heart, something which, did she not face it and fight it and conquer it, would eat like a canker into her life; something she had faced and fought and flung far from her in the days of her life in England. "She would have none of it in her new life," she vowed. The fear, the loathing of it, had driven her into her work, had possessed her to fill all her days and leave no moment for idle dreaming. The angry winds died into fitful blowing, stars shone out overhead, the storm-lashed river ran in great white-capped waves and broke booming along the shore. Mistress Brent went to the foot of the attic stair.

"Sarah," she called; "Sarah, I need thee! I am restless and yet weary," she declared as Sarah's heavy foot stumbled down the stair; "bathe my head in sweet waters, and should I fall asleep, leave me not! Thou canst slumber on my bed likewise; 't will not be the first time."

And Sarah, with the memory which never left

her of Mistress Margaret's childhood days when she herself, a lass, had tended her and oft had slept with her within her arms, bathed her brow tenderly, when the glittering lights were blown out in the hall, and thought her own thoughts about the wet cheeks and lashes beneath her big, soft hand.

The morrow was clear, with sparkling sunshine and air whose every breath set one's veins a-tingling; yet it found Mistress Brent languid enow. Storms had swept over her, and she was bent as the tender things outside. Sarah hovered about her all the morning; she saw, did no one else, the shaking fingers, the dark circles under her mistress's eyes, the listless air.

There was little the men could do. The world was far too wet for work. Water stood in the shallow corn furrows and the fodder hung whipped to ribbons upon the bent stalks.

Jock must see to guns and ammunition and defence. It took him all the morn, and she herself was busied with him; and as the day grew on, and the tender green things unbent themselves and lifted their faces upright to the sun, glad of the moisture at their roots, the strong impulses of her active life came back to her.

"Sarah," she called blithely as she passed her in the hall, "see thou hast a good supper. I am

famishing as though I had been fasting; truth, I've wanted neither breakfast nor dinner to-day."

Sarah went off well pleased. She need not watch her mistress now. Her housekeeping was the delight of her heart. To have such plenty, such bounty of fish and fowl and game; it was Sarah's only cause of discontent that there were so few to share it; but to-night there were to be unlooked-for guests about the board.

As Mistress Brent paused in her doorway she caught a glimpse of a white sail on the river. There was scarce ever a sail upon it she could not read. She took her way to the edge of the bluff; there were others in sight — two, three, four! What meant it? For days, sometimes, the blue waters were deserted. There was a pinnace rounding the point; here was one nearer at hand, and here another, and here came a vessel from St. Mary's.

She turned and studied them eagerly. They were small bay and river craft; this, wide of bow, low set with slanting sails, was the vessel of the Courtenays, who dwelt beyond her brother-in-law; there, could that be from the manor of the Memmerton's, and this at the creek's mouth from Point Grace? She sat down on the clay-embedded stair and watched them.

Aye, so it was as she thought. One by one

they shaped their course for Captain Rogers's, and she thought on Mary with her sick babe and small house crowded with those refugees, and wondered how, tired and worn as her sister already was, she could make shift with them.

But she had forgotten the pinnace from St. Mary's. She turned her head quickly; it was nigh her own wharf. She caught the glitter of scarlet on the deck. Sooth! that was Giles, and by him; she sprang to her feet and ran down to the wharf.

"I knew, I knew it was thou!" she cried, as she flung her arms about Mistress Hawley's neck. "Giles, was it thy pleadings?" she demanded, mischievously.

Giles shot her a quick glance from his hazel eyes as he stood flicking with lace-bordered handkerchief his spotless clothing.

"I did but tell her thy speech, thinking she would see the merriment of it."

"And I came. I was already thinking on my summer's visit, and then thy brother's pinnace was at hand and he purposed to return at once."

"Giles, 't was well thought on," said his sister, warmly. "I knew not — faith I'm glad! thou knowest not how drear we felt after ye sailed away and left us with our ears still ringing with Indian tales."

"Look there! and there!" said her brother shortly, pointing down the river at the vessels nearing Captain Rogers's wharf.

"I see, and have already read their tale," said Mistress Brent, nodding her dark head. "I am but glad I have not added my own household to Mary's cares." She linked her arm in Mistress Hawley's and turned toward the house. "I will send Lucy for thy mails.

"With thy men and ours, Giles, we are well garrisoned," she said as they went toward the house, though she waited anxiously for his reply.

"I will see Jock and look about the place," he answered evasively, as he hurried away.

"There he goes," cried his sister when he was out of sight, "a popinjay in his apparel, and yet as brave a soldier — though his temper is somewhat caustic and his judgment not always of the best."

She trailed her slipper's toe in the gravel of the pathway as she loitered. "He needs a mistress for South Fort Manor," she said, with mischievous, sidelong glance at the friend she was so glad to have by her side; but Mistress Hawley's soft cheek was unflushed and her brow unclouded, she only looked calmly pleased to be once more at St. Anne's Manor.

"La!" said Margaret, half petulantly, "I wish he would marry; there'll be none then to say I should be head of my brother's household. I have enough ado about mine own. Thou knowest the cattle we brought from Virginia? 'T is a finer breed than any at St. Anne's. I have a calf for thee; thou shalt have it soon as it is fuller grown. Come, lay thy things aside and we will to the stable and see it."

But Giles came hurrying to them with white and stern-set face. He had found Jock, indeed, and with him one other, dust-stained and fear-shaken.

"There are hundreds," the fellow was saying. "The woods swarm with them!"

"Where? what tale is this?" demanded Giles, sternly. The fellow fair shrieked at the sound of the unexpected voice; the men, absorbed, had not noticed Giles's approach.

"Captain Brent!" cried Jock, "my eyes are glad to light on ye;" he stopped abruptly, shamed somewhat by his warmth of speech.

"The governor cautioned me," he went on, "to have spies about the woods 'til this danger was past. The man here — Bill, tell thy tale to the captain. Lord, man, thou art shaking as though thou hadst an ague! He stalked the woods, cautious, as thou wilt know. They were quiet, as

alway. 'Long 'bout afternoon he lays him down in the corn furrows, out in the far field, sir, and what with the heat and the quiet he fell asleep."

Giles moved impatiently.

"Arter a while, sir, he opens his eyes and he lays still as the dead; peering through the corn stalks he sees a savage crouching and then lifting himself upright. He stands and he stands, looking toward the house, and then he steals off, and Bill, thinking if there's more to see he must get a peep at it, crawls up nearer the wood. Ye know how clean it is thereabouts; them woods was just swarming. Bill says —"

"'T was Indians, stripped, with daubs of paint all over them, and they was comin', stealin' up to the place where that man I first clapt eyes on was waiting. He was twice as tall as ye," the man ran on, excitedly, "and his legs were big as Jock's whole body, and he had a club the twain of us could not have lifted."

"Jock," commanded Giles, "keep Bill with thee; see to the securing of every living thing. I 'll not have this tale spread 'mongst the men 'til they be done with their meal. Go quietly, ye 'll need all your strength. Gather with all thy fellows in the main house when ye be done. There is danger afoot, and of the direst."

IX

THAT night of horrors! from the fearful dread which fell upon them at Giles's words — the barred and shuttered house, the breathless waiting for danger, the first crouching form seen in the thickening dusk peering behind the men's cabins, the blazing tobacco sheds, the bellowing cattle, the fiery flames of burning outbuildings, and in their light the savages, hundreds strong — to their last refuge in the cave.

The savages turned their fury on the manor-house; from every loophole the guns held them at bay, but the house with its great oaks about it was an easy prey. The roof was soon ablaze.

"There is naught left but the secret passage," panted Giles, as he raced down the stair from the attic, where he had vainly striven to quench the fire upon the roof. "Margaret, call thy women together; Jock, get the men. Thank God there are bullets a-plenty in the cave! These are fair spent."

He was stripped of his scarlet coat; that and the tapestry torn from the loopholes was kicked

and trampled underfoot; hands and face and bare arms were grimed with powder, but his clear-cut face was ablaze with the joy of battle; his cold indifference, his prim formality, had fallen from him.

Mistress Brent groaned at his words.

"Is there naught else that can be done? Can we not hold out? There is not a wound amongst us."

"Thou speakest folly! e'en now — this way, Margaret; haste ye, for God's sake!" he called to the men and women crouching about them in the narrow part of the hall. And while he yet spoke there was a fearful ramming at the heavy door, which shook in every fibre.

Giles caught his sister by the hand and rushed down the narrow cellar-stair. "Here," he commanded, "haste ahead with her, Jock. The women next. My God, the door is breaking, they rush within! Mistress Hawley, why did ye tarry?" he pushed her roughly ahead of him in the low, dank entrance, and paused to try and pull back the casks and hide the manner of their escape long as might be.

Within the passage the darkness was of inky blackness. Mistress Hawley stumbled; he laid his hand upon her shoulder as he guided her before him. "Push forward close to the rest; now ye

can stand upright. Great God! heard ye ever the like?"

The Indians were within the manor-house. They could hear the beat of innumerable feet as they rushed through its rooms in search of victims.

"They will soon be upon our trail," he muttered, "bloodhounds as they are.

"They are too close upon us!" he exclaimed, when the frightened fugitives were huddled close in the cave which could scarce hold them. "We dare not take to the boats."

"We must," panted Mistress Brent. "We dare not stay here. Already the air grows foul.

"Jock," she cried, "see if all are here. Pray God there be none left behind. Hast any one a candle? Grace o' Our Lady, hold it aloft." She gave one gasp of horror as the pale light flickered down upon them, and Giles's quick look following her horror-stricken gaze saw—

Mistress Hawley's great coil of hair, loosened by the knocking against the narrow passage, fell about her. She stood nearest the entrance by which they escaped, Giles close beside her; and as Mistress Brent raised the candle overhead she saw the gleam of a tomahawk and the savage flash of an Indian's eyes, whose hands were already reached forth toward the long, full locks. But Giles was upon him, his dead form blocked the passage.

"We must out!" Giles caught Mistress Hawley by the wrist.

"Jock," he whispered, "go forward with Mistress Brent. Make a dash for the boats, the savages are yet about the house. Stay, where is the ammunition? Deal out to each man, quick!" as Jock's fingers grew clumsy with his haste, "the candle fails. Now!"

Jock tore at the growth about the entrance, and pushing out his great head gave one quick, cautious look about. The high tide ran close beneath them, the boat rocked softly by the stake to which it was tied, and the stars shone as calm and clear as though they saw but the heaven of the river beneath them and not the hell upon its banks. He wriggled out; they followed him in breathless haste and huddled 'neath the shadow of the cliff. Jock started for the boat; his feet were on the wet sands when he stopped as though he were shot. He crept back.

"Mistress Brent," he whispered, in an agony of despair, "we must back into the cave. They are on the beach waiting to rush upon us. There!" they heard a sharp whisper and the muffled tread of many feet.

Giles leaped forward. "'Fore God, 't is the soldiers; no Indian ever trod like that. Hush!" he checked the movement of the men. "There

lies their boat, though how — Jock, guard the women, stir not thou and thy fellows — I'd miss it not — not for — " He raised Mistress Hawley's hand he still clasped for an instant to his lips and then dashed forward. There, climbing the bluff scarce twenty yards away were Calvert and Cornwallis and the men of Maryland who had been organized to proceed against the Susquehannocks.

"The savages swarm in the house," gasped Giles, as he pushed forward to Calvert's side and ran with him across the lawn. "Forward!" cried Calvert, "with all the noise of hell!"

The Indians, hearing that great shout and the rush of many feet, were terror-stricken. They fled from the light of the burning buildings to the refuge of the darkness, the soldiers in swift pursuit. By smouldering ruin of barn and stable, in furrows of the maize, by forest's edge, the Indians fell. The sun rose strong and clear. The alarm had reached Captain Rogers, and his men joined in the pursuit. Of Nanticoke and Susquehannock scarce a score found safety in their villages.

Calvert would have an end of it at once. Cornwallis and his men took to boat and sailed to the great river of the north. They raided the Indian villages on its banks, and on the green isle, set like a jewel in the river's mouth, they strengthened the block-house built by Thomas Smith and now

deserted, and left a score of soldiers to keep perpetual watch and ward.

Never again, swore the governor, should they gather such force as to be able to march against the settlements of Maryland.

But at St. Anne's it looked as if, in truth, Mistress Brent's labors had come to naught. Well was it that the storm of yesternight had beaten upon the roof and left its shingling sodden with the wet so that the blaze spread slowly.

Mistress Brent was not one to linger far behind. As the battle-shrieks rang further and further afield from the little group huddled on the beach, she would listen to no word of caution.

"The soldiers drive the savages before them," she cried, "we must to the house. Jock, will ye tarry like cowards here? Nay, then, I will alone." She sprang up the clay-embedded stair, but they followed her close. Before the house the way was clear.

"Up to the roof!" the mistress of the manor-house cried; "the women will draw water and pass it to you. Mistress Hawley, come with me." She ran through the hall to the well which had been sunken behind the house and caught the bucket and sent it splashing down; Sarah and Mistress Hawley sprang to the sweep. The women were ready to rush with it to the men; until the well

was nigh dry they wrought, and the house was saved.

When the ghastly light of dawn broke on them, grimed with smoke and cinders, their hands blistered with the working of the well-sweep, they saw they had stood for hours with the dead body of an Indian a yard away.

Mistress Brent sickened at the gruesome sight. "Come away," she begged Mistress Hawley and Sarah; "the house is saved, what there was left to save," she added, bitterly. "Come, Katharine;" she put her hand on Mistress Hawley's arm, fairly staggering as she did so.

"It hath been a bitter night," said Mistress Hawley, soothingly; "we will within doors."

"There is naught left but the walls," wailed Sarah, as they put foot inside the hall.

"Peace!" commanded Mistress Hawley sharply, her own nerves strengthened by the fear in Sarah's face and voice, though she was fair appalled at the ruin she saw about her.

The tapestry hung by shreds upon the walls or was kicked and trampled in heaps upon the floor; the vessels upon the table where they had eaten their meal overnight were strewn here and there; the hangings of the bed, the covers, the beds themselves, were torn and trampled in the room; clothes from the chests were thrown in glittering heaps.

Mistress Margaret went from room to room without a word. Where had been luxury and fair order but yesterday, was now chaotic ruin.

She set her red lips firmly. Indignant anger surged through her, renewing her spent strength. She had thought to throw herself for rest in some corner of her dwelling, instead she would bend to the hardest task.

"Call the maids from the attic," she commanded Sarah. "The men likewise. Mistress Hawley, lend me a helping hand." She bent her slender arms under the heavy overturned table. From the folds of the rich carpet which had covered it rolled a pewter tankard battered and dented. Mistress Margaret picked it up.

"Come to the store-room," she cried, as she made quick way toward it. "'T is well I had it built here next the living-room, else would we have gone starving." She knelt by a cask. "Here, my hands shake like the leaves in the wind, thine are as steady as a rock. Thou wilt not think on thy abstemious habits," she begged; "drink a draught of this. Nay, an thou art so dainty," she dragged a mouldy bottle from the shelf and held it in her arm as she foraged, "and here is cold capon and maize cakes. Our Lady be praised that Sarah is ever provident!"

She hurried with food and drink to the hall.

The men and women, spent and grimed, were gathering there. "Here," called Mistress Brent, "here is food and drink; rest ye, there is work yet to be done. Katharine, sit ye here; carve this capon. Pass the tankard about," she commanded; "there is more and plenty. Well the savages had not time to find it.

"The soldiers will be returning soon," she declared when the servants were comforted with food and drink, "we must make some order and cheer for them. Aye, tasted food ever so good?" she held a maize cake in her blistered hand and she ate of it and the capon savagely. "Remember thyself also, Mistress Hawley, as thou servest the fowl;" she began to make a jest of their pitiful estate as she walked to and fro, food in hand.

"Faith, Sarah, here is darning for a twelvemonth," she cried, pointing to the tapestry. "The silver and pewter play hide-and-seek." Her restless foot kicked against a candlestick. "Methinks I see a drinking-vessel peeping from Giles's coat; aye, 't will be a rare tale to tell for many a day, this of our siege and of the saving of our manor-house. Sarah, draw again. Jock, uncork me this bottle. Now, Katharine, faith thou 'lt take a sip from this!" She picked up Giles's coat and shook it lustily and the mug ran ringing on the floor. "Here," she cried, as she filled it to the brim,

"here's to St. Anne's! An thou drinkest it not, I'll know how little ye love me! Now, to work! Jock, put back the feather-bed in place in my chamber, then take the men without; there are dread objects there." Her face hardened. "See they be gotten rid of. Lucy, take one of the women with thee to fold the clothes within the chest and cover the bed fairly. Sarah, see what can be done for feeding of the soldiers."

"I shall render my help to Sarah," said Mistress Hawley, steadily; "thou canst attend affairs here."

"That will I."

And sleepless, haggard, worn, they yet worked passing their strength, under the energy, which urged them like a lash, of the slender woman who flitted from room to room, from worker to worker, with words of praise or direction, and help from her own maimed hands.

Tapestry was rehung upon the walls. "We'll make some show of order at once," she vowed. Rifled chests and drawers were hastily put in fair condition, the table in the hall was spread with battered plates and vessels ere the first glint of a soldier's coat was seen across the fields.

"Faith," then cried Mistress Brent as she caught Mistress Katharine by the waist, "an I look as thou dost, we'd best hide us in my cham-

ber! Thy hair is witches' locks, thy face smutted like a savage's!" She caught her leaden-framed mirror from the wall, "Look on thyself!" she commanded.

Mistress Hawley looked negligently, then turned it toward Margaret. "And on thyself!" she said, quietly.

Mistress Margaret gazed wild-eyed; her brown locks were clay-powdered and stuck with bramble leaves, one great scratch crossed her cheek from mouth to ear, daubs of smut were on forehead and cheek and neck, her gray eyes blazed like beacon-fires, and her face was drawn and set with nervous tension.

She flung the mirror upon the bed and broke into shrieking, hysteric laughter, that ran shrill and nerve-cutting and broke into wild sobbing.

"Margaret, Margaret," pleaded Mistress Hawley, "hush thee! Tut, to be a baby! Would have thy women hear thee! What would they do? Shriek, too! I'll warrant thou 'lt have the whole house about thy ears. Brave women the soldiers will think us to greet them thus!

"Here," she drew her firmly to her shoulder, "have thy cry out!" she slipped her cool, steady hand along the dark, rough head; "it hath been enough, this night, to try the strongest! and thou hast been so brave, always to the fore."

Mistress Hawley had no mind of her own steady mien, nor how it had gone as far toward heartening the scared household as Mistress Brent's spirit and bravery; nor did she dream that Giles would forever remember that moment when the Indians' approach was first seen and the candles scarce lighted the barred and shuttered house; how as the women shrank affrighted she had taken the linen and hot water Sarah brought ere the alarm was given, and daintily and precisely polished each plate and drinking-vessel in the candle-light. He would remember her always as she stood, calm, sedate, with steadfast look and clear eyes. Could he have seen her now as his sister laughed and wept upon her shoulder! for suddenly she flushed from round, firm chin to wide, low forehead, flushed at the sight of a scarlet coat flung upon the bed, and remembered that but for the quick bravery of its wearer there 'd be at least one victim of the attack on St. Anne's.

"There," she comforted, as the sobbings died away, "thou wilt feel the better for thy crying. Come, wash thy face of these signs of siege and warfare."

Mistress Brent went obediently but listlessly about her toilet.

"Methinks the savages could have been not over a quarter of an hour within the house," she

complained, "and yet the whole house looks as though it hath been wrecked."

"Thou hast so much to thank God for," said Mistress Hawley sternly at the complaining tone; "thou hadst best fall upon thy knees."

"Aye, I must make my peace first with myself, and God afterwards."

"Margaret!"

"Thou knowest what I mean. I must reconcile myself to this heavy loss."

"An thou takest not thy heart to God first and art *willing* to receive this loss —"

"Nay," pettishly, "there is work, work ahead. My barns are burned down, my fields trampled upon."

Mistress Hawley turned quietly to the door. Her toilet was already finished. "Margaret, I shall go and sit me down in this fresh air and clear my brain of horrors, and thank God I am alive to look upon green trees and sparkling water."

It was a quiet Margaret who joined her there. All her energy was gone in that great fight against fire and disorder. She could scarce trust her eyesight at the peaceful scene. Mistress Hawley had strewn fresh sand upon the floor. Foot-mark nor blood-stain showed there; the tapestry hung straight upon the wall, and rose and fell with the fresh wind; the board was spread, and in the doorway,

looking on waving shadow and sparkling river, as though she took her pleasure on any summer morning, sat Mistress Hawley. Margaret sat down beside her, and thus the men found them on their return.

"Zounds!" cried the governor in his astonishment, "we looked to find wreck and smouldering ruin; the house was ablaze when I last did see it, and we find ye—"

Mistress Brent rose stiffly to her feet; every muscle was tingling with weariness. "Cousin, we have much to thank thee for!" her voice shook and hot tears trembled beneath her eyelids. "But there are no words for this," she faltered.

"Look not for them. Faith, the savages lighted a beacon which did us good purpose; we had set sail for Palmer's Isle and the Susquehannocks, hoping thus to strike a blow should break their strength ere they started. But they had been too cautious, their movements were nearer a head than we had knowledge of. The wind was fitful and we beat about from side to side. We neared St. Anne's, and I would fain have come ashore to see how ye fared, but I knew thy brother tarried with thee. Yet as I thought on it the captain put his ship about, flames burst above thy dwelling, savage cries could be heard e'en there!

"We had found the Indian sooner than we

thought," he went on glibly; his face was alight with the joy of action and success, his tongue as ready as Mistress Margaret's. "Zounds! we gave them a chase. There are strange fruitage in thy fields;" he laughed, but stopped abruptly at Mistress Brent's shudder.

As for Giles, he had no sooner caught sight of the women at the door than he had hastened within. He was prinking at his toilet and bemoaning his stained and rumpled coat, as though there had been never other and wilder things, to think on, or better for the doing than the wearing of a fancy collar. He went back to his old flippant speech with Mistress Hawley. Were there warmer thoughts or more daring hopes deep in his heart, he kept them well to himself, and was but the careless man of fashion even until the day when the governor's pinnace set sail for the Susquehannocks, and he himself followed for the commandery of Kent and his lonely home at South Fort Manor.

But now the governor was as a man enlivened with newly drunken wine. He had rescued St. Anne's, he had put the savages to awful rout,— the tale of it would be told in the Indian villages for many a day, and the plantations of Maryland, near and far, scattered on bay shore or creek lands would rest secure.

He talked confident and strong, and waxed ever merrier; but Mistress Brent grew more and more quiet, her white face and drooping figure were but like the ghost of the piquant mistress of St. Anne's. The governor set it down to sheer terror of the danger which had beset her.

"Cousin," he queried, when the work of that arduous day was done, the dead bodies of the Indians dragged to decent burial, the stampeded cattle gathered together, and a wide search for lurking savages made through field and forest, "Cousin Margaret, art heart-sick and frightened out of thy love of St. Anne's?"

Mistress Margaret shook her head.

"What of thy house at St. Mary's? Will not The Sisters' Freehold be thy biding-place this autumn-tide?"

"I know not," she answered, languidly.

"Hast not enow —"

"Dost think 't is over-dangerous?" she asked, as carelessly as though she spoke of things overseas.

"Dangerous!" the governor's blue eyes fairly blazed, but he held himself in check and went on quietly.

"An it comes to danger, sooth, thou wert never so safe."

"Now thou mockest me!" She clenched her hands upon her knee.

The governor moved impatiently. "There hath ever been this danger," he forced himself to say; "that is why I did dissuade thee from the first. With all our friendship for the savages, there was ever this fear of treachery, nor could we guess in such case where the blow would fall. The richness of thy dwelling, the easy conquest they looked on, brought them first here. They thought to make swift work, and then — but why should I dwell on such horrors. They will feel, now, they dare not strike a blow 'gainst *any*. When the men of St. Mary's, already flushed with victory, ravage their villages, they 'll be so broken, I 'll warrant me they breed no further foments. And with the Susquehannocks broken, under watch, as I purpose henceforth to keep them, there 'll be no future trouble with the Indian. And we must bring them," he went on musingly, "once more to our friendship, else how can they learn of us the great truth we set out to teach them. Nay, trust me," he ended, proudly; "thou wast never more secure. The cloud, like a storm whose mutterings I long have feared, hath broken and rolled over and is gone."

"Then, may —" as the governor looked again, impatient at her speech. "I know nothing — I have no purpose," she broke out passionately. "All is ruined about me."

They were walking under the oaks in the long slanting shadows of late eventide. The governor rested his hand lightly upon her shoulder and turned her toward her dwelling; the oak branches were thick about the blackened roof and veiled the ruin there.

"See thou art man enow — woman enow, an thou wilt, to know how soon that loss is plenished; and for thy cabins and stables, there are straight trees in the woodland and men to do thy bidding. Thou hast lost few cattle and not one of thy men."

"'T is the second sermon on thankfulness I 've had read me this day. I know not if I enjoy it. Methinks I must seem pagan to my friends to be so harrowed."

"And so thou art an thou art not on thy knees this night to our blessed Mary."

"My other preacher bade me pray to God," she answered, petulantly; then, as if stricken by the horror in his face, "Come, thou knowest I mean no blasphemy. My soul will turn to God, but now it is faint and numbed within me, as is my body," she added, plaintively. "Let us rest here." She sat down at the top of the stairway leading to the beach. "Talk of lighter things!"

But great things were in the governor's mind that day; there was no light banter on his tongue.

"I could not tell," she went on; and if the governor's humor was unusual, so, in truth, was Mistress Margaret's. He was used to seeing her moody, fitful, gay, scornful, but never so wholly sad. "I could not tell thee how I have learned to love this resting-place on the stair." She ran her hand, though it was bandaged for its blisterings, caressingly over the grass near her. "Here when I am restless or sad or wearied, and the mood comes oftener than thou thinkest, I sit and watch the long, rolling waves when the tide is far out as now. See how they break in curling foam upon the shallows! Or watch the sea-fowl, how thick the air is with them now; duck and gull and fish-hawk! how they all come closer and closer homeward as the night falls! how many miles they may have been ere sunrise, yet their unerring flight brings them again to nest of reeds or clay! Here, if ever a sail glides by, one sees it, and the singing of the wind in the trees or the murmur of the waves low or loud—"

"Aye, but idle dreams will come to all;" and the governor spoke knowingly. His heart was full of dreamings, whether they were idle he knew not. But on the morrow he set sail for Kent and the river of the north.

X

WHEN the governor again was face to face with Mistress Brent it was he who needed comfort.

"Never had the plantation seemed so secure," he had told her, and yet others saw it in not such a light. Dread talks of the attack on St. Anne's had run like fire from manor to farm to the farthest settlement. Men who hitherto had been courageous were panic-stricken; the refuge-houses of each hundred were crowded, and above all St. Mary's was filled beyond the housing of the people. Corn and tobacco, well-nigh saved, dried and withered or rotted in the field; cattle, which were hardest of all the settlers' needs to procure and were most carefully cherished, were left astray; fever and ague, "the prevailing sickness," were rife in the overcrowded town; men loitered about the streets, under the shade of the great mulberry, in the hot autumn days, around the tables of the coffee-house in the evenings; tales were told daily which grew bigger for each telling.

Upon the men themselves was a very witchery of fear and, added to that, a growing spirit of dissatisfaction.

Calvert, after his expedition up the great river and the defeat of the Indian there, tarried too long in Kent. He knew naught of the foment in the province, and Captain Brent besought his aid in righting many matters of dispute in Kent Isle, where the men were never friendly to my Lord Proprietor, and would give naught but the slightest observance to his government, but beset the path of the commander with thorns.

Then, matters of the isle adjusted, the Indian signally defeated, the governor, his spirits mounting high, sailed homeward to come upon this foment in St. Mary's, and to find there a ship newly come from England and bearing letters from his brother. In England subjects strove against their king, and strove successfully; the king was a refugee from London; order and rule were at an end. The Lord Baltimore commanded his brother to join him at once, so that together they might make a better fight for their province, which else might be lost them in the dire upheaval.

In vain Calvert strove with the people in the town and assured them the savages were never to be so little feared; to them the forest swarmed

with Indians. The ship waited his departure. In his emergency he sought the Mistress of St. Anne's.

"Giles must leave his commandery of Kent to shift for itself and serve as lieutenant-governor whilst I be gone," he told her after stating the heart-sickening news. "And thou, I trust thou wilt tarry with him at St. Mary's. Thou hast strong influence with the people, thy bright face will be more heartening to them than many words which I could say; and if ye will keep a hospitable house at my poor dwelling, make whatever cheer seems best to enliven and encourage the people — "

"Thou givest me a pleasant task."

"'T is what the people need. They have grown morbid, and will eat out their hearts with useless dissatisfaction. Such feeling will spread like a very canker at the root of our colony. They need to be made confident once more."

"Methinks I am but a poor teacher."

"Thy ensample hath been a benefit to the colony. The bravery with which thou, who actually did stand the blow, hast met it, when thou canst tell them."

"Of that night of horrors!"

The governor turned his gray eyes on her, and Mistress Brent noticed how deep the furrow had

grown in his high forehead and how heavy the lines were graved about his mouth.

"I am ever trifling," she said penitently, "even with such topics."

"Ye will heed my request."

Mistress Brent grew as serious as she had looked on first hearing the news the governor came to bring.

"That — I must think on it. How soon?"

"I but wait to leave full instructions with Giles. I have already despatched my pinnace for him, he will be at St. Mary's by the morrow's eve."

"And thou canst tarry here till then?"

"Methinks I am needed each hour at St. Mary's."

"Aye, but I have my own poor affairs to think on; there are troublous questions. Belike St. Anne's can ill spare me."

"Cousin, 't is bare six weeks since I did leave thee with blackened ruins about thee; where now is any trace?"

"Thou hast not looked into it. A good fourth of my tobacco crop is ruined, trampled by the soldiery; nay, I begrudge it not; the cabins are but lightly built and thatched for roofing."

"Tut! thou art never satisfied."

"I will send Mistress Hawley to talk with

thee," cried Margaret, half offended. "An I think kindly on the plan," she added, relenting at the troubled look of Calvert's face, "I first must see Jock."

"Jock," grumbled the governor with cousinly freedom, "as if he could not take charge for thee; then it would be as it should have been at first, thou wouldst dwell in thy house at The Sisters' Freehold and leave him here."

But Margaret only smiled shrewdly as she went. Jock was far afield, it would be hours ere he would be at the house; her impatient humor, the idea once started, would not brook delay. Truly St. Anne's, with Mistress Hawley gone and the governor in England, with no pleasant visits to relieve the tedium of the winter, no careful watchfulness over her welfare, would be but tedious, mayhap worse. Her nerves were yet shaken with the horrors she had seen.

And then the appeal he had made her. It flattered the very core of her pride that she was needed at the governor's house, amongst the people, to be the head and front of affairs: she tilted her chin and threw back her head, her eyes flashing. She leaned forward and stroked Brown Bess's mane thoughtfully; her mare had been hastily saddled, and she had gone to seek Jock. The dried corn-tops in the field by which

she rode swayed and rattled as the light winds shook them, and the air was full of the smell of them and the ripening corn and the fragrant breath of the pines in the woodland near; overhead the crows whirled and circled, and cut sharp silhouettes against the deep blue of the sky. A deer peeped shyly through the scarlet sumac leaves and bounded away, the squirrels leaped in the bronzing oaks, and the yellow leaves of chestnut and walnut fell sifting slowly down. It was the turning of the leaf time, and every flitting flash of forest life would have had its meaning and its delight for Mistress Brent on any other morn she was abroad, but now her mind was filled with new fancies.

Truth, it would be well to dwell for a time in the midst of things. She was aweary of solitude.

There was Jock. The men and women, working alike in the field, were stripping the corn from the stacks, throwing the yellow ears in heaps in the furrows. It was a pleasant harvest picture, for men and maids fared well at St. Anne's and worked willingly; and Jock, though he looked soldier enough with the great blunderbuss slung at his back, carried it but because some great beast might come crashing out of the forest.

He had seen the glint of Mistress Margaret's

riding-skirt and the sleek side of Brown Bess, and knew she sought him. He came up to her complacently enough, for he was proud of the men's prowess and work that autumn and boasted much of what they had done, and how, in spite of all, their work had gone forward.

"The maize harvest is bounteous," he said, as he came up to her; "what we have lost with the tobacco crop that will well repay."

"Thine old hobby, Jock."

Jock, slow of speech, had no answer, and Mistress Brent plunged at once into talk of the governor's visit, his wishes, the affairs of the manor. Could he tend them? And then she wondered at the look on his stolid face, half hesitating, half ashamed.

"What ails thee, man?" she questioned sharply. Jock fingered his skin cap nervously.

"We have been nigh upon four years at St. Anne's," he began, clearing his throat huskily, "and five in Maryland."

"Thou art a good reckoner," said Mistress Brent, lightly.

"Five years in the province," went on Jock, gathering courage as he spoke.

"And what if ye have?"

"Ye know the terms on which I sailed hither?" he questioned, sturdily.

Mistress Brent sat erect in her saddle, a shiver of apprehension running through her.

"Truly," she said, slowly, "thou hast well nigh served thy term."

"'T is five years." Jock beat again upon the refrain which had been in his every thought for many a day.

"And ye would be free? Is that what ye 'd say? The life grows tedious?" she questioned, passionately; "ye 'd have your freedom-due, and begone? Mayhap ye 'll petition the governor for a hundred acres of good land near the Indian; 't will be had now for the asking, I 'll warrant me, mayhap already cleared; land goes a-begging, and the farmers are at St. Mary's."

Jock's square, honest face reddened from the deep-cut dimple in his chin, which softened his rugged look absurdly, to the straw-colored thatch of hair, and the stutter he had conquered long ago, save in moments of deepest feeling, broke his speech.

"Me–me–methought —"

"Tut, tut! take time, man, speak slow." Mistress Brent's eyes were flashing and her whole heart angered; she was face to face with the problem she knew well she had to meet in the provinces and had planned for vigorously, and yet it took her unawares; to have the servants

she had just trained for good service demanding their freedom-due, setting up next their plea of equality.

"Jock, I thought ye 'd serve me more faithful than the rest; my father —"

"Aye, I fought under him in Flanders, and followed him home and stayed with him 'til his death."

"Methought I had hit upon the staunchest of our following when I found thee willing to follow me across seas, thee and Sarah." She was looking, musing gravely, down the dim vista of the forest by her side, where the sun sent long shafts like powdered gold-dust sifting through the tree-trunks, and she saw not that Jock grew more fiery red, and then, old soldier that he was, braced himself firmly and honestly.

"Why should I not serve ye?" he questioned.

"Why, indeed?" Mistress Brent's red lip curled bitterly.

"Mistress Margaret, ye are angered at me," he began, steadily; "I had thought to have speech of ye more quietly, but now — I have no purpose to take up lands."

"Then why speak of thy freedom?"

"Because it *is* my freedom, and because it *is* my due. I have served thee well, and will yet," he said after a short silence. For after her first

hot anger Mistress Brent's thoughts were rioting within. Here was an end of all her plans, forsooth.

"Just as ye do now?" she questioned, eagerly.

"Just as now, save for the wage."

"As if I'd grudge it thee! Jock, I need thee; thou knowest it! An ever ye purpose leaving St. Anne's, take some younger man, train him in thy ways; ye will never be so well entreated elsewhere. What do ye need?"

"Naught — yet —" stammered Jock.

"Then ye 'll bide on at St. Anne's?"

"I had no other thought."

"And thy freedom-due?"

"If ye 'll but make a note of it as owing me. I have no need as yet, but, mayhap —"

Mistress Margaret plucked a bit of the scarlet five-leaved ivy that climbed near her and smoothed it thoughtfully.

She knew the terms of indenture well, and she had purposed, when the terms should first be past, to make a ceremony of it, a feasting for the manor; but Jock, she had thought of him always as part of St. Anne's and her own life there. She thought of it all now quickly; she should have foreseen this, and not have been so taken unawares.

"Jock," she said at last, "we 'll fix thy wage.

But then —" She went on talking of the affairs of St. Anne's to him, the ship she had engaged for carrying her tobacco to London, what time it might be due, adjusting her plans once more for the leaving of her manor. "But I shall come again and again, and ye will come to St. Mary's. Faith, I talk as if I were leaving behind my will and testament. The men and maids will tarry here, save Sarah."

And now Jock's old confusion came back a hundred-fold.

"Sa–Sa–Sarah," he stammered; "Sa–Sarah is a ra–rare housekeeper."

"And a rare maid," said Mistress Brent, dryly.

"Lu–Lucy serves ye well."

"Zounds, man, and ye would rule my household —"

"Sarah is over thirty-five.

Mistress Margaret looked at him with eyes big with astonishment. "What folly fills thy brain?"

"Mistress Margaret," pleaded Jock, "we 'd thought to ask ye when things were more easy like."

"Say thy say, now and here!"

"I 'd been thy father's man; I 'd ne'er seen much o' her; I 'd, I 'd fain mar–marry her," he stuttered, angered alike at his own embar-

rassment and the little look of scorn on his mistress's face.

"Mercy o' God! marry her, Sarah, and I," Mistress Margaret fair choked with her own astonishment. "Marry her!" she blazed; "I trow matrimony blows like a blast about me. I no sooner put foot within the province than that slip o' a sister o' mine must wed. Look at her now! Faith, she dare not say she owned her soul! I must be petitioned by half the bachelors within the settlement."

Mistress Brent reddened with embarrassment. She had meant not to blurt such confidences.

"Here 's Giles," she went on quickly, to hide her own confusion, "head over heels in love with one who will not turn her head for him." Jock listened agape, such news of the captain was news indeed. "And I 'll warrant me there is courting enow with the men and maids, an ye set them ensample."

Jock grinned. The talk was spicy, and would be food for his slow thought for many a day. "I've been busy," he muttered.

"About thy own courting. What says Sarah?"

"She, she'd be willing, methinks."

"Well, well, I must e'en use myself to Lucy. But I 'll miss her sorely; Sarah hath mothered me."

"There 's naught I could do, an I would, would tear her from ye. She'll quarrel rarely to 'company thee."

"Then —"

"I think I can persuade her," said Sarah's lover, dryly; and at his tone and stolid look Mistress Margaret threw back her head and laughed merrily.

"I'll have no undue suasion," she declared. But Jock was meditating a last, big shot.

"Truth," he declared, going to the very heart of the matter as those who say but little often do, "methinks 't would be well if ye yourself would be thinking on matrimony now. There 's one as would kiss your very footsteps."

"Peace!" commanded Margaret, shortly. "I'll have none o' it, but go my own gait," she flared as she whirled Brown Bess about and went galloping homeward.

"A pretty tempest ye have brewed in my own household," she flashed as she joined Mistress Hawley and the governor in the hall. "Nay, look not so innocent. I'll warrant me ye had your suspicions long ago."

"Suspicions? what has gone wrong, or is it right? 'T is hard to read thy face, thou lookest half merry and half vexed."

"Thou art a rare interpreter of one's looks."

"If my fair cousin will pardon me, 'tis one of the few gifts I pride myself on possessing."

"Then, perhaps thou canst go deeper yet and tell me the cause of it."

"'T is something of thy household affairs; so much thyself hath told. It crosses thy purpose, and yet amuses thee. 'T is not so serious, yet unlooked for. 'T is something what Jock hath told thee."

"Gramercy! thou hast nigh hit the bull's eye. Listen!" She began with excellent mimicry of Jock's stuttering confusion, a mimicry so mirthful, the governor laughed long and heartily, and Mistress Hawley must wipe the tears from her lashes; and Margaret, heeding naught for the moment but their merriment, went on to the last parting advice of her friendly servitor.

At which the governor grew suddenly serious. "A wise fellow," he declared; "very wise and most excellent advice."

"Advice," said Margaret, saucily, "is never to be followed. One does the opposite to it alway, and follows one's own whim."

"Pray God the whim be wise!" cried the governor, a twinkle in his eyes.

"If 't is a woman's, 't is always wise."

"In her own sight."

"And others'."

"But should her whim cross that of others?"

"Ah, well, a whim's a whim, and soon forgot."

To which the governor said but a low, devout "Please God."

"I'll find Sarah," cried Mistress Margaret, springing to her feet. "I'll spring this speech of Jock's full on her."

"Margaret," pleaded Mistress Hawley, "the poor creature, 't will so distress her."

"Distress!"

"Thou knowest how she loves thee. I wonder she had any room for thinking on Jock. That thou shouldst taunt her; come, talk of thy winter in St. Mary's; the governor hath done us a service. Think what 't will be to have thee with us again; there's not a child will not joy to see thee."

"They have forgot me long ago."

"That they have not, I trow," declared the governor; "I am ever loaded with messages to Mistress Margaret."

"Thy load must grow heavy; thou hast never delivered them."

The governor laughed. "I pray thee mercy!" he cried. The light banter was good to his heavy soul; he believed it was that which rested him most whenever he came to St. Anne's; whatever cares might weigh on him he could talk of and

find his cousin a thoughtful listener, a wise adviser, and then the lighter mood which often came upon her, the bitter, scathing speeches and scornful flauntings and gay hospitality.

"*Mercy, mercy!* when was it thine? When ye knew me lonely, pining?"

"Thou hast ever looked it so plainly."

"I should sit thus." Mistress Brent held herself primly erect and drew down the corners of her red mouth forlornly.

"Thou art the pattern of a love-lorn maid," laughed Mistress Hawley.

"Love-lorn! Mad with solitude, ye mean."

"We 'll cure that this winter. Three-fourths of the colonists are crowded in the town."

"Pouf! we 'll send them 'bout their business."

"Would God ye could."

"That will be our affair; we 'll lord it so well, Giles and I, thou wilt not know us on thy return."

"'T will suit thee, Madge," the governor stammered, shocked at his slip o' the tongue; "'t will suit thee to flout it o'er all."

"Flout! ye 'd think, in sooth, I had set up for a court beauty."

"There 's none at court so beautiful."

"An ye commence to make such flattering speeches, I must pray ye cease. Didst ever hear

such nonsense, Katharine?" But Mistress Hawley was only smiling in placid enjoyment of the badinage.

"An ye are both against me, I'll leave ye."

"What a will-o'-the-wisp ye are," cried Mistress Hawley, as she caught her ere she had risen. "Twice hast thou tried to leave us; rest ye, and pray be sensible."

"Aye, that's for thee," flashed Margaret.

"But come, the governor sails for England; there must be letters, messages."

"Truth, I had forgot."

"Ye will thank my lord most heartily for the fruit-trees he did send me and the rose-slips," said Mistress Hawley, gravely.

"I told thee thy gift would not be forgot," cried Margaret; "he but sought to make return for thy cheeses."

"'T was most kindly thought on. I brought some of my own rose-cuttings to Sarah."

"She hath been pothering about them ever since. It grieves her that the lawn is too shaded for rose-growing, but the south side of the house suits them fairly—'tis there she has planted them."

But when they fell to talk of England and my Lord Baltimore, Calvert was grave. He looked far deeper than either woman could fathom, and

knew the terrible war there, was a thing no man could see the end of, an upheaval which might tear to shreds the fabric of his brother's plannings and his work, which might oust them from Maryland and the New World. And yet he must leave a quaking colony, shaken to its depths, behind him.

XI

HURRY as she might, Leonard Calvert had sailed for England and Giles was established in his house at St. Mary's ere Mistress Brent could reach the town. There was one duty at St. Anne's she would perform punctiliously. From the very planting of the province the indentured servants had some cause of plaint; many masters were harsh in their treatment, kept them beyond their bonded time, gave them their freedom-due grudgingly, so that amongst the first laws of the Assembly were those requiring the master to deal faithfully with them, provide good clothes and housings and food, and see they held not their servants beyond their proper length of service.

But first there must be some teasing of Sarah: it could not be withstood. From the moment when Jock had told her of her mistress's consent that they should bide the winter at St. Anne's, Sarah had been in a tremor of bashfulness and joy and regret, which became her stout figure and round, rosy face but illy.

"Faith, Sarah, I'll warrant me you have been crying; such red lids become you not. What will Jock say?" rallied Mistress Margaret the next morn.

"Jock!" sniffed Sarah.

"Aye; methought there was some meaning in thy talk of lovers and quick weddings those first days in the province."

"Mistress Margaret," protested Sarah, tearfully.

"I told thee then what thoughts were swarming under thy gray thatch. Beshrew me, though, I knew not already—"

"'T is just since all these dreadful times," protested Sarah, tearfully, "Jock said a word to me."

"No sheep-eyes, hey?"

"I vow. An he did I'd tear them out o' his head," declared Sarah, stoutly.

"Gramercy!"

"He just come to me after all these awful horrors, and he says—he says 't aint no place for women to bide 'long o' themselves here; and I says—I says—the whole upshot was he asked me to bide 'long o' him."

"A rare and tender wooing."

"Jock is a good man."

"None better."

Sarah turned away, hurt at her mistress's light

scorn, but Mistress Brent came running behind her.

"Sarah, Sarah!" she flung her arms about her, "I have angered thee; I thought not—"

But Sarah had folded her to her broad bosom and was hugging her as tightly as in the days of Mistress Margaret's childhood.

"Say but the word; I'll never leave thee, Jock and no one other."

Mistress Margaret smoothed the round, red cheek above her.

"'T is all settled now, and all right. I did but tease thee," she reassured her. "Ye will do me more service here; ye can keep things well in hand and have them in readiness for me."

So Sarah was comforted. The next day but one Mistress Brent called Sarah and Jock to her in her chamber. The day's work was done and the early dusk filled the room, making dark shadows about the bed and hangings near which Mistress Margaret stood.

"Jock," she said, as he came slowly forward behind Sarah, "thou hast charge of the stores upon the manor; now, or when you think fit, these are yours." She read from a list she held in her hands:

"Three barrels of corn;
One billing hoe;
One felling axe.

Your other belongings are here;" she pointed to a pile of clothing on the bed as she read:

"One new cloth suit;
One new shirt;
One pair new stockings;
A new Monmouth cap;

these, and the clothes you already have. The governor will give ye, an ye petition him, fifty acres of land likewise; but I trust ye will bide here your lifetime, here at St. Anne's. Sarah," she turned the memorandum she held to the light, though she knew each item of it by heart, "thou hast the same as Jock from out our stores, and these likewise:

"One new petty coat and waistcoat;
One new smock;
One pair new shoes;
One pair new stockings;

and the clothes formerly belonging to ye. These are your 'freedom-due,' your right by the law of the province." She smiled brightly at the man and woman standing awkwardly there. "But these are wedding gifts," she pointed to a heap of soft, dark stuff on the bed; "'t is thy wedding gown, Sarah; there is a suit for thee, Jock, finer than this fustian. I would have ye wed on the morrow; what," for Sarah had flushed a fiery red, "say ye not so, Jock?"

"Ye will take the pinnace at dawn," she went on as if it were a task, this matter in hand, she would do well and generously and yet she loved not; it seemed to put a barrier betwixt her and her servitors. "Ye will take the pinnace at dawn for St. Mary's. Father White now tarrieth there; ye will be decently married. Mayhap, an the wind be fair, ye may be again at St. Anne's by nightfall. Take with thee whom thou wilt as help for sailing. Your papers I will have duly attested and made out at St. Mary's. No! no!" she clasped her tiny hands upon her ears; "get ye gone — now — save your speech for one another." She signalled them out of the room and sent them away peremptorily.

It hurt her more than she had thought to make this formal severance. True, their servants in the old land were free to come and go, only they rarely went, one counted on their lifelong faithfulness. But here, such new visions filled their minds, land was so easily come by. She had fitted them both with all they might need for a settler's life; the sturdy axe could soon fell trees a-plenty for the building of a rude and simple cabin, and make much of their furniture likewise.

She smiled as she thought on some of the simple huts she had seen, gourds for drinking-vessels, smooth chips for plates, logs set endwise for

tables and chairs alike, pine boughs and skins for bedding — ah, yes, it was simple enough; and a man was one's own master, so they said, and would come, mayhap, to a vote in the Assembly.

Mistress Margaret shrugged her slender shoulders. She was aristocrat from curling hair to dainty foot, and cared not a whit for such madness, but, instead, would have each right the Charter of Maryland granted her, even to the wearing of a title. Only her cousin Baltimore had, strangely enough, grown neglectful of such matters as he had lain much stress on there in Arundel.

She stood dreamily when they were gone, — Jock and Sarah, — looking through the open window toward the river. Darkness lay thick under the oaks, a few belated fireflies twinkled in the grass, the sea-fowl lingering on their southward way called shrill and plaintive from their circling flight, the lonely voices of the eventide pierced to the heart of the solitary listener. The morning calls of nature are a joyous reveille to awakening, to work, to hope; but as the sun sinks slowly in the west and shadows fall, the call sounds low, subdued, and sad.

Mistress Brent at her window, looking forth on shadowed lawn and darkened river from which the sunset lights were swiftly fading, and listening

to the murmuring wind in the bronzing oaks and the long, low wash of the tide, was aware that she joyed in the thought of living once more amongst men.

She was soon amidst many of the province. Ere she landed, the idle canoes about St. Mary's wharf, the group under the great mulberry on the Point, where the loungers were wont most to loiter, told their tale. As she walked slowly up the sandy street, the many faces at door and window of the houses crowded to overflowing told it again.

It had been two years since she set foot in the town, and she went, now, with many a glance about her, notwithstanding that Giles, resplendent in his bravery, walked by her. She would have a word with all the children in the street until he stopped her.

"Peace, Margaret, ye will have every chit of them all at thy heels. Come thy way, afterwards."

"Aye," said she, laughingly, "I must see them all, the round, fat beggars! Their cheeks show well enow there's plenty in the town."

"Plenty," quoth Giles, his face growing stern-set; "an these fellows return not soon to their claims, there will be want of the direst in Maryland ere another twelvemonth."

But Mistress Margaret's humor was blithe. No dark fears yet possessed her. In the garden plot, here a well-tended rose showed autumn blossomings, there sweet winter violets bloomed; for each she had a quick observance. As long as the women tended their flowers and the children sang in the street, she knew that all was well. But as the winter grew apace, even Mistress Margaret waxed faint-hearted. Some of the men, unwilling to lose the fruit of all their labors, returned to their claims to harvest a crop already damaged by neglect; but many, their fears magnified by the fears of their neighbors and grown to overblown proportions, lingered on through all the winter. The households, but furnished for themselves, felt the strain of added numbers; oysters from the river, wild ducks from the marshes, and venison from the forest were plentiful but bread grew scarce.

The weather, too, was rigorous, beyond the wont of the climate. Scarce was the Christmas season, with such cheer and festivity as Mistress Brent could make for it, passed, than bitter cold set in. The river was frozen from side to side so that men could safely cross it, snow fell irregularly for days and drifted into door-yards and chimney-side, and sifted through the bare branches of the forest and weighted the thick pines.

Now Mistress Margaret saw what the governor had been to his people. Through every day came messengers to those who were in his stead, messages of want or sickness, news from outlying plantations, prayers for help, — they must heed each, as they knew he would have done.

Giles's finery went neglected as he bent him to his many tasks. To visit the plantations, to stop for a cheery word with the gamesters in the coffee-house, to hold, above all, the tangled affairs of government as well as he might, left time for little else.

Mistress Margaret must take him to task about his thoughtlessness concerning himself, as he came one night wet from ploughing through great drifts of snow and shivering with cold. She herself rested by the great fire in the governor's living-room, where she had come upon Calvert that evening when she had dared to visit him.

The table, pushed back beneath the window, was still covered with papers, but neatly folded or tied in packages, — Giles was ever orderly, — inkhorn and quill, and seal of Maryland and the map made by Captain Evelin yet garnished it, side by side with manuscript leaves of the player Shakespeare and the parson-poet Herrick. Giles affected the new literature, and would have it sent him from London.

The dark, heavy settle with its high-back screen against the draughts was close drawn before the fire, and Mistress Brent with Mistress Hawley by her side sat upon it; the great chair waited Giles, and Mistress Margaret fretted at his long stay.

"Had any one forewarned me he'd so forget himself! Come wind or weather, he is forever about; he must visit the coffee-house for a word with the men, he says they need a word of cheer now and then. Cheer! the cowardly" —

"Nay," protested Mistress Hawley, comforting, "thou must not dwell on such hard thoughts, 't is not like thee."

"But Giles, Giles is all I have within the province!"

"Hast forgot Mary?"

Mistress Brent rose from the great settle and walked around it restlessly to the window.

"'T is as clear as daylight," she declared as she drew aside the hangings from the window; "the stars shine like glittering steel, and the white light of the moon — how the wind whistles, the ice forms already on the pane; if Giles were but within!"

"He will return ere long."

"Thou art a sure prophet," his sister cried, a note of relief in her voice. "There he comes!" as she saw a tall, slender form bent to breast the

wind; "though why I should have worried this night of all others — He is ever late and uncertain. Faith, I believe it is because the bitter cold chills one's courage as well as one's blood." She came back to the settle and cuddled close to Mistress Hawley's side. "'T is such a night as one loves to have the household within doors."

"Ah, Giles," she called, as he paused at the doorway blinded by the glare of the firelight, "thou hast come at last. I e'en grew uneasy."

"Uneasy," he answered lightly; "didst think wild beasts were abroad in the streets?"

"God's faith, I trust not. Thou art wet, the snow clings even to thy shoe buckles. Go, change thy footgear."

"I will but warm me by the fire." He came forward to the chair by the fire, not knowing the room held any save his sister. The firelight shone full on Mistress Hawley's fair face against the background of the dark wood of the settle.

A quick joy shone in Giles' bright hazel eyes. "I thought not —"

"I despatched a messenger for Mistress Hawley ere sunset and besought her to visit us. She is over chary of her company and needs much coaxing to bide the night, but I shall not let her from us."

"'T is biting cold," declared Giles as he leaned

forward to warm his stiffened fingers; "methinks" — he paused a moment looking thoughtfully at flame of oak and hickory — "the smith's wife is ill of pneumonia, 't is the fifth one in the town; many children are ailing, likewise."

"And thou hast been from house to house?"

"'T is but what the governor would have done — and what thou wilt do on the morrow," he cast a kind, shrewd glance at Mistress Margaret's face.

"I shall take Mistress Hawley with me."

"Mistress Hawley hath much skill in nursing?" questioned Giles.

Mistress Hawley smiled her acquiescence.

"Thou wilt have enough to tax thee, an thou wilt help us."

"I have been always ready. Governor Calvert hath come oft to me for aid."

"Thou shouldst see the herbs and simples hanging from her kitchen rafters. She 'll burn her patients with pepper teas and hot mustards."

"The cold must be driven out," said Mistress Hawley, defending herself.

"And rub them with bear's grease."

"There is naught better for the rheumatism."

"Come, I 've had the megrims all the day! I have been close shut indoors too long; hadst thou not come — but now I have both thee and Giles."

"Thou art sober, Giles, and thy lace is torn," she leaned toward him and fingered the torn fringe at his wrist, but Giles, unused to caressings, flushed and drew his hand away.

"Thy collar is rumpled," she went on, teasingly.

"Margaret!" called Giles, sternly; it angered him to have his toilet so dwelt upon before Mistress Hawley.

"Well, well, I did but want thee—"

"A man is oft careless in his dress because he hath other matters to think on," said Mistress Hawley. Giles had lost nothing in her sight by his work in St. Mary's that winter.

Mistress Brent rose to her feet. Her own rich gown hung in bright folds about her, and the coils of her hair shone jewel-set upon her head.

"I have just the thing," she declared, as she went quickly out of the room.

Giles, before the fire, was well content. The warmth of it crept through his chilled body, and the sight of the calm, clear face near him warmed his heart; as he leaned forward close to the fire he studied her delightedly with sidelong glances, — the ripple of the fair brown hair on her white temple where the blue veins shone, the eyes wide set, deep fringed, the oval of cheek faintly tinged with pink, the long curves of her figure.

The red lips were curved upward. He had

watched them a hundred times: curved thus they meant content or merriment; straight set they often were, it was when her mood was determined or when she was going briskly about her household tasks; drooping they sometimes were, and the sadness of her eyes and face then cut him to the heart.

The silence which fell on them when Mistress Brent left them was of friendship and knowledge of one another; there was no need for hasty speech to break embarrassed pause.

The wind whistled about the house and shrieked in the chimney's mouth, and the flames crackled in the hearth and the hot sap hissed and spluttered on the burning logs.

Mistress Margaret came gayly back, an Indian basket heaped with red apples in her hand.

"Now," she cried, as she knelt before the fire and placed the apples in shining rows before the hot coals, "we 'll roast apples and tell tales; would we had Mary and her lute."

Giles laughed. "When last I saw her lute Rosalind was plucking at a string, the rest were broke."

"Poor Mary!" sighed Mistress Margaret, as she turned an apple to her liking.

"'T is what she said of thee when last I visited her," said Giles, teasingly.

Mistress Margaret looked over her shoulder in round-eyed wonder.

"Of me?"

"Dost think thyself the most fortunate of all womenkind that none should pity thee?" questioned Mistress Hawley.

"Pity, why, 't is akin to love, the poet says," teased Giles.

Mistress Brent drew back on the bearskin rug and coiled her skirts about her.

"Here are some walnuts," she said complacently, holding up her basket, "newly cracked, and hickory nuts with thin shells from the great tree beyond the town. Giles, reach me hither the pewter plates from the mantel. They are but freshly dusted," she said anxiously to Mistress Hawley.

She ran her white hands in the basket and brought them out heaped with nuts, black and yellow shelled, and piled the plate for Mistress Hawley's knee.

"Giles, 't is thy turn now!"

She filled the plate upon her own lap and began to eat with hearty enjoyment.

"Faith," she laughed as a spluttering apple fair splashed her hand, "now, wast thou not so abstemious," she teased Mistress Hawley, "we 'd brew a bowl o' punch with fresh hot apples for it."

"I love a roasted apple better," said Mistress Hawley.

"With savory spices and soft sugar," went on Margaret, teasingly; "the governor's housekeeper hath them all within her store-room."

"'T is right she should," declared Mistress Hawley, stoutly.

"And right we should use them?" teased Mistress Margaret.

"Come, Madge," broke in Giles, "tend thy apples, methinks there is a smell of burning in the air."

"Burning! 't is done to a turn;" she leaned forward and plucked the apple by its stem. "Katharine, an thou lovest such —"

It was an evening of happy carelessness they long remembered; one of the few they could snatch from that hard winter. For next day, spite of cold and snow, Mistress Hawley and Mistress Brent were abroad, and found work for many a day to come.

Mistress Hawley's stock of herbs and simples was well nigh exhausted before the siege of the winter had passed, and bread had grown so scarce Giles had fitted out a pinnace for trade with the Indians of Virginia, and bought maize, which he distributed according to the people's necessities. There had been tales of Indian depredations all

the winter; some said the cattle had been driven off or hogs had been stolen, lurking figures had been seen about the distant clearings; but the cattle had been found astray and hogs had been shot half wild in the forests, their owners' mark upon them. Men began to see they had scared themselves with their own hobgoblins, and to think of returning to their claims.

And when at last they did they found their houses wet with the storms of winter that had beat upon them untenanted. Beds and clothing were mouldering; the corn which yet hung upon the stalks was moulded in the husks, or else corn and stalk alike were beaten in the furrow or destroyed by wild beasts; the tobacco they had cut before the fear came upon them was illy cured where it hung in the open sheds, there was trouble to find even the seed for the new planting.

But in the spring-tide, when the sap ran riotous through trunk and tip of wood-growth, and saxifrage and anemone were nodding at the forest edge, and the air was full of smell of bud and blossom and resonant with sweet wild-bird songs, when every day of sunshine was a call more potent than any human plea to be up and doing out of doors, men took heart of grace.

There were fish in the rivers and game in the

woods, and strawberries and wild fruits in their season would yield their due; slight shelter was needed for the summer, and by winter much they had lost could be regained.

Hope ran in their veins like the sap in the woodlands; the people of the town, relieved of their surplus households, worked in their gardens or ploughed their fields beyond the town. The women tended their houses and dug about their roses, their cowslips, and sweet, early blooming spikes of wallflower, and the children played in the streets.

Yet the colony had been shaken, and, like a woman once frighted, hid tender nerves under its calm.

XII

THOUGH the spring days came and went, there was no sail from England. The governor, so he had said, would be back with the first of the shipping, but no vessel showed on the river save the pinnaces of the planters.

Through Jamestown, however, came news of victorious rebellion in England, a mighty tearing of all her people into factions, and those of Maryland feared for her governor's success.

Giles was growing restless as to his commandery of Kent, and Mistress Margaret would be gone to St. Anne's. She had had enough of men and their affairs, and longed again for the quiet of her manor.

She was thinking of it restlessly as she loitered along the street from the governor's house by chapel and mill, around Mattaponi Street toward Mistress Hawley's. Before the coffee-house some idle fellows were playing quoits, another lingered by the wide, low doorway, smoking his evening pipe lazily; across the sandy green-bordered lane

the shadows were growing long, and Margaret noted, as she walked, the sweet white clovers showing blossom in the thick-set grass, but her mood was not of pleasant loitering nor idle chat.

"Faith," she complained to Mistress Hawley, when she came upon her in the narrow strip of yard, trimming the rose which had grown into a bower above her door and window, "I feel as lazy and as quarrelsome as — as — " she paused for simile, "as those idle fellows there," she added, pointing up the street.

"They look merry enow," said Mistress Hawley, when she had bade her welcome.

"But they are quarrelling," declared Margaret, persistently, "and might have come to blows had I not sauntered past; I did but give them a look from the tail of mine eye as I came and they quieted, forsooth."

Mistress Hawley reached to catch a high, rugged spray and trim it evenly and bind it to the cottage side.

"One fellow would have it his ring had hit the stake-and shied away," went on Margaret, mischievously making much of the trifle; "the other," she looked above her where she sat in the doorway, "the rose will soon be budded," she said, abruptly; "it minds one of the day we first set foot in the province."

"'T was in pouring rain and howling wind."

"Belike it was. La! Katharine, look!" Margaret leaned up against the door-post while she shook with laughter. There down the street came the belated cowherd hurrying the cattle before him; they half turned at the corner, and he was upon them with his stick belaboring them, but they turned again and charged furiously by the coffee-house, fairly running on the unconscious players.

"Moll looks as if she'd gore him an she had a chance," laughed Mistress Hawley; "'t is well he could skip it lightly. I must hasten to the dairy; come, come with me."

"That will I. I ne'er think of thee and thy house without a memory of that cool nook there."

"An you had to spend as many hours a day as I do there, mayhap you would tire of it."

"Aye, I tire of everything in its turn. I am tired now of St. Mary's," she declared, as she followed along the well-trod pathway to the spring house beneath the walnut whose pale-green buds were showing faintly.

In the cool, dusky dairy the clear water rippled by crock of rich milk and jar of yellow butter, and the scent of ripening cheeses on the shelf mingled with the fresh, sweet smell of earth and running water.

Mistress Hawley tucked up her long, full skirt

and rolled the sleeves from her round wrists and lifted with strong, supple arms the heavy crock to the shelf. She began to skim the cream with quick, practised hand. She must make ready for the fresh milk the maid would soon bring.

Mistress Margaret went back to her early plaint. "I am tired of St. Mary's."

Mistress Hawley nodded as if to say she expected such affairs.

"Katharine," begged Margaret, speaking suddenly and quickly, "I would ye were not so vastly industrious."

"In truth!" said Mistress Hawley carelessly, as she went on busily with her work.

"In truth!" mimicked Mistress Margaret; "then ye would, Katharine, hearken to what I have to say; 'fore God, I mean it, every word; listen!"

"Do I not alway?"

"Tut! one would think you the easiest moved of mortals."

"In truth!"

"In truth! thou art fair angering, Katharine, with thy everlasting 'in truth,' thy short words and wise looks; I'd fain shake ye soundly!" she said, eying her with a look of mischief and resentment mingled.

"Try it!"

Mistress Margaret sprang to her feet and put her

slender hands on Mistress Hawley's firm shoulders. "Would I could!" she cried, then flung her arms lightly about her.

"Katharine, listen! Give up thy cottage here and go with me to St. Anne's; thou shalt share with me in all things."

Mistress Hawley gasped. "Margaret, what folly—"

"And ye did, ye'd marry in a twelvemonth," said Margaret, as she turned petulantly away.

"Marry!" cried Mistress Hawley, shortly. "Methinks there was some truth in what ye said, ye wax idle."

"Now, Kate, be silent. I blame myself and belabor myself, but for another to belabor me—never! I did but ask thee to St. Anne's," she went on, defending herself. "There's many a one—"

"Aye, many a one would be glad to go. But thou knowest how one's heart takes root. I would not leave here," she looked about her at cottage and garden and dairy, and thought on her fields and pastures allotted outside the town. "I would not give up these, no, for naught; besides—"

It was Mistress Margaret's turn to mimic. "Besides," she quoted, petulantly.

"Besides, ye know my humor; I would be beholden to none."

"But would have all beholden to thee. Thou art proud e'en in thy charities."

"My charities? I have none."

"Then all thy kindnesses count for naught."

Mistress Hawley was half angered. She turned quietly to the skimming of the milk and poured the thick, yellow cream into the crock for the morrow's churning; naught broke the stillness save the sound of the rippling water and the rustling of the walnut's branches. Then there came a ringing step adown the path.

"Margaret," cried Mistress Hawley, "who is it?"

"Faith, 't is Giles! he said he had some errand at the coffee-house and would come hither when it was done; it must have been of quick despatch."

"Giles?" cried Mistress Hawley, rosy red; "run, meet him, take him to the house! I would not have him see me thus."

But Mistress Margaret was lazily still, a look of mischief in her dark eyes.

"La! Katharine, thou dost the dairymaid to perfection; that bare arm, now, Giles would give a pound for the looking on it."

"Margaret!" Mistress Hawley was plucking with nervous fingers at tucked skirt and rolled-up sleeves.

Margaret stooped hastily and lifted a moist crock from the floor.

"Hi! Giles," she called, "we are within the dairy. I would assist Mistress Hawley," she declared demurely, as she went diligently to work skimming the cream. Giles came on quickly, his erect, slender figure showing clearly as he came down the pathway.

"Margaret, Margaret!" cried Mistress Hawley, shocked, spite of her embarrassment at Margaret's manner of work, "ye will break the cream and ye—"

"I'll warrant me she is a rare dairymaid," laughed Giles, as he reached the doorway.

"There was none within," he went on, apologizing for his presence there. "I knew where to search for ye at such an hour. I've heard Margaret prate of thy dairy oft."

"Come, Margaret, leave it to Ann," begged Mistress Hawley, throwing the great spoon upon the shelf.

"Nay, finish thy work," begged Giles; "'tis pleasant loitering here."

Giles leaned against the doorway and watched with keen, delighted eyes the supple figure moving to and fro. The maids came with the foaming milk which must be strained into the clean crocks, and the churning must be made ready for the morrow.

The sun was well set behind the vast forest and

the sickle of the new moon hung in its red westering when they came gayly up the pathway to the house. The doors of the hall were opened back and front, and as they neared the one a messenger swift with ill news came in the other.

Giles knew him instantly spite of the dusk that thickened in the hall, 't was a fellow of his house of Kent.

"James," demanded his master quickly, "what brings thee hither?"

"We did think it best one should come," the man faltered, not knowing what to say, now that he stood at last in his master's presence.

"Ye have come with news; what is it? speak!"

"A ship hath come to Kent," began the man, nervously.

"Is it of England?"

"I know not."

"God's grace!" blazed Giles, forgetful in his impatience of the womankind about him; "whose ship? What is thy tale?"

"'T is Captain Ingle," faltered the man.

"And who is Captain Ingle, forsooth?"

"'T is a trader and adventurer who hath been to St. Mary's in the earliest days of the settlement; he is a warm friend and adherent of Claiborne's," said Mistress Hawley slowly, speaking as one who feared what might yet be said.

"What does he at Kent? Out with it, man! Thou hast ever a ready tongue."

"The people were o'erjoyed with his coming; the settlers crowded to the fort; he had much to tell them —"

"In God's name, of what?"

"Of England; that the king would be o'erthrown and Maryland —"

"And what of Maryland?" broke in Mistress Margaret.

"They will have no more of the government of St. Mary's."

"What!" blazed Margaret, "they dare to rebel against the governor Calvert and the Lord Proprietor?"

"'T is not the first time," said Mistress Hawley, quietly; "ye recall the tale I told ye long ago."

"Aye, but so long ago." Mistress Brent was hot at such presumptuous daring.

"The governor will make them repent," she cried.

"But they say —" the man paused as if he feared to finish.

"Say what?"

"That the governor comes no more," said the man, eying Giles anxiously, as if to read from his face if such news could be true.

"The governor comes on any day," said Giles,

shortly; "and so you may tell them for me. He will show them their folly; he will come with soldiers, and I shall be of them; but stay! James, ye must hasten to my house. I would have ye return to Kent, see that my household is kept guarded and they lay not a finger to it. I must send messages — I — Margaret, wilt thou come with me now?"

He hurried her away. But questionings and talk only made the man's tale the clearer.

Kent had shaken off her allegiance to St. Mary's and again declared her independence.

Now Kent, that green isle far up the bay, the gem of the Chesapeake, was a thorn in the side of the settlement of St. Mary's. Settled by colonists under William Claiborne when the grant of the Calverts was yet unthought of, they would have none of their rule when they were settled within their province, and even when conquered by force of arms were lukewarm in their allegiance. Yet for four years they had owned the Calverts' sway, their burgesses had sat in the Assembly, and the governor looked on their subjection as perfected and appointed them a commander. Toward him they were much disaffected, but Captain Brent, now in his stead, had tried by all his arts to win them, and counted on some success. Now —

This Captain Ingle had come, as his fellow said, from God knows where, and brought them these tidings heard God knows how, and had persuaded the people as they would gladly be persuaded.

The king's cause, he told them, crumbled to the ground, and with his friendship went the cause of the Lord Proprietor. Claiborne, who had powerful friends on the other side, would be reinstated. The islanders had crowded into the little settlement to see and hear him; they were on fire with joy and enthusiasm and would have none of St. Mary's rule, no, not for a day. And the men proceeded to choose their officers and to reinstate the government they had held ere Calvert came. Giles's commandery was overthrown. Bitterest of all, he had lost it whilst in charge of the province, and now he dared not act, and could not an he dared. The people, but lately scattered to their homes, were in no mood for warfare. Sufficient to them were their own affairs. The soldiers at St. Mary's and the small fort of the town were too few for assistance, and the lieutenant-governor must wait the governor's return.

As though ill news came never but others followed in its wake, there came likewise a tale of trouble from St. Anne's. Whilst in the stable-yard Jock had been taken unawares by a bear gaunt from his winter's sleeping and ferocious

from his hunger. There had been a hard fight ere Jock could make an end of him, and the beast's great paw had ripped his shoulder deeply. Jock was abed.

There was none at the front of affairs when the planting must be attended to and the tobacco made ready for the early shipment. Mistress Margaret must be gone.

XIII

LIFE is ever new. One views it never with the same gaze. It is like a clear glass which, catching the white light of eternity, throws ever a changing hue on all around it.

So Mistress Margaret came back to St. Anne's, joyous to be again within her home, yet with fresh cares at heart and a conscious, anxious memory of St. Mary's that would not be gone.

Instead of the easy, delighted absorption in her own affairs in which she had lived, was a constant alertness which kept her alive to every breath of rumor, that rumor which somehow percolates the most remote countries and makes one sure there is a brotherhood in man, a sympathetic beating of the pulses of humanity, gainsay it who may. The rumors were mostly of the doings of the lieutenant-governor.

She had left her brother, Captain Brent, wild with impatience. To sit idly down while anger ran riot in his veins was well nigh impossible to his humor, yet it was all left him to do; and

having it to do, he must meet it as a soldier should who had learned to wait as well as act, and to wait wisely.

She found herself so daily impatient that she despatched her pinnace for news. Giles had intended ere the governor's return to visit the distant manors where the force of men had been large enough to save the people from fear of Indian invasion and to keep them within their homes when the settlers had crowded into the town. He would pay a stately visit to St. Peter's Key at the head of St. Inigoes Creek, to Delight on St. George's River, and to Philipp's Manor on the Potomac. He would see the block-houses of the hundreds and have the captains make their rounds of inspection earlier in the season than was their wont. Not a house within the province but must be duly provided with ammunition. Every man must have for himself and his man-servants one musket, ten pounds of powder, forty pounds of lead bullets, one sword and belt, one bandelier and flask. Mistress Brent knew they were all within her house, and more besides; her brother-in-law, the captain, was most rigorous in his inspection, and had added, moreover, a monthly drilling to which each household must send its complement of soldiers.

And knowing Giles was gone from St. Mary's

on such errand, she strove to hold herself content and tend her own affairs.

St. Anne's, with the budding oaks about it, the newly built barns and stables, though they were but pine logs fresh and green and thatched with reeds, with its fresh turned fields and greening forests, was fair enough to delight its owner's heart. Within the dwelling Sarah had proven an excellent care-taker. Carpet and tapestry were well darned, pewter and silver beaten into shape and polished, floors scrubbed to shining whiteness, for Mistress Brent would have none of the sanded floors or green-spread rushes her neighbors affected. "Ah, well!" she sighed, "'t is well to be home again," and being home and being content she must needs go a-visiting Mary and her babes. No daring through the woods, this visit, but her canoe and two stout rowers likewise, should the wind fail them. And Mistress Margaret, tingling with life to her finger-tips and unwilling to brook even the hour's idleness within the boat, must learn to sail, forsooth, though her man was in a quiver of fear and horror and besought her far as he dared, pleading the treachery of the great river and its sudden squalls; and Mistress Brent, looking with careless glance along the shifting blue water, called shame upon him for a coward, when here the bay lay like a thing

asleep, and there a cat's-paw of a wind ruffled the blue into purplish tints and caught the sail and sent them spinning onward.

She kept her hand on the tiller, the servant by her side, and watched him trim the sail with learning eye. "Aye," she declared as she sprang on Captain Rogers's wharf, "I will be oft on the river in the summer, 't is senseless waste to have the men from out the fields to take me on my jaunts; I will learn myself." And she went on her way gayly, a smile on her lips as she noted Captain Rogers's dwelling.

There in the spring sunshine it stood, gray, forbidding, the high palisade weather-worn and warped, the slope of the roof and the chimney tops alone showing above it, the gate tight shut.

"Knock soundly upon it!" she called to the man who followed her. The fellow picked a great stick from the ground and struck the gate a resounding blow, when it flew open, and a sentinel, blunderbuss at his back, stood within.

Rosalind played in the bare yard and in the doorway sat the boy, rosy and content.

Mistress Margaret caught the girl in her arms. "Auntie Madge!" screamed Rosalind, who loved her aunt with all her tricksy ways devotedly.

"Aye, and here is master Frederick — what!" for the boy hid his face shyly against the

door-post and raised a chubby arm above his head.

"Mary," she cried to her sister, who came out into the hall, "he knows me not!"

Mary came up to her delightedly. Rogers and her babes, the yard and beach and wharf — her sole outing-place — grew tiresome now and then, and even the babes became a cloying joy. Margaret was like a breeze from the north sweeping over her. She felt again the Mary Brent of old, and no longer Mistress Rogers of Rogers's Hope.

"An ye come not oftener," reproached Mary, "what can ye expect?"

"Coax him to me." Margaret seated herself on the step by his side.

"Nay, Margaret," Mistress Rogers chided, "what would Henry say an he entered and found Mistress Brent newly come from the governor's residence, sprawled on his doorstep romping with the children? Come, sit here! leave Frederick; he 'll come to his senses shortly." She pulled a chair forward in the hall, and Margaret, Rosalind fast clasped in her arms, rested herself within it.

Fair as she looked, childish pleasure in her eyes, the bright color burnt by wind and sunshine in her cheek, there was none to see, to admire, nor cavil. Captain Rogers was hunting in the wood and returned not.

She could talk as unrestrained as in the olden days, and by and by the babe, with many a shy delay, came close and closer, till he too was on her knee, his eyes fixed on the jewel at her throat.

"The sweet chuck!" cried Margaret, unfastening the pin; "he shall have it!"

"Madge!" protested her sister.

"Nay, I have never given him aught save his drinking-mug; his sister here," she lifted Rosalind, "hath fair hair like her mother's; for this young lady I shall have a set of corals of wondrous carving to show against her pink cheeks and white arms. For him — aye, Mary, what does a boy want?"

"A boat or a blunderbuss," laughed his mother; "'t is Frederick's sole delight."

"A soldier," said Margaret, thoughtfully, though inwardly she prayed he 'd never be such a martinet as his father.

Mistress Brent held the jewel in her hand. "Do you remember it, Mary? It was our father's, he wore it ever at his collar;" she placed the jewel, an amethyst set in twisted gold, in Mary's hand. "'T is fitting it should be worn by his eldest grandson, but, Mary, see ye keep it for him, and see to it, thyself, the lad is told of the deeds of his grandfather who wore it, much of his brave,

loyal life. Teach him to be such another and ye do well."

Mary flushed to her fair hair. She knew well what lurked under Margaret's words. The boy was reared as his father would have him, and Captain Rogers had many a tale of his own forbears, who yet shone dimly beside the ancestry of which the Brents could boast. "I will, I will!" promised Mary fervently, and then the two women fell into talk, wholesome and intimate, — talk of Mary's life that winter, shut in, subdued; a tale of the children's pranks or Henry's hunting feats; talk of Margaret's winter days in St. Mary's, the gossip of the neighbors crowded there, the tale of their affairs, of the babes new born, of the marriages within the settlement, of new made claims, and of those who might venture out from England in the spring.

Margaret held strenuously from any grave speech, and the evening sped away.

"Faith, I must be gone," she cried, springing to her feet and spilling the children in such fashion they rolled laughing to the floor.

"Madge, we never see thee," begged Mary; "ye come and go like a flash, and so seldom."

"Aye, but thou knowest I am not lady of the manor only, but manager of affairs as well, and now that Jock is disabled, — why cannot ye come

and visit me? What is to keep thee from it? Some day when thy husband is far afield take thy boat, or let me know and I will send hither."

Mary faltered some reply; she knew she must first seek her husband's permission, and she knew that for her to take the babes and tarry a day, he would deem it monstrous, though he tarried oft himself for weeks.

"In faith I grow lonely oft, and, Mary, when the other babe has come,"—poor Mary flushed red again, it was the first word Margaret had said of the babe who must soon be here,—"thou must spare me Rosalind. Wilt be auntie's girl, sweetheart?" but the little girl held back at that, though she followed to the wharf and clung about her till she was in the boat; and Mistress Margaret looking often back saw her there, a thin, childish figure showing bright against the gray wharf and silvery river. Her mother stood by her, the boy clinging to her skirts.

And Margaret tilted her firm chin and drew long breaths of the invigorating air. She felt as though she had been in prison and her spirit, freed, could sail and circle with the gulls overhead.

Musing thus she forgot her new-born wish to master the sailing of her canoe and sat with thoughtful eyes as the boat, heeled to the fresh wind blowing as the tide came in, skimmed

homeward, for which forgetfulness her man was thankful.

As he trimmed the sail for the wharf of St. Anne's the prow of a great ship came into view around the point. Mistress Brent sprang to her feet and the boat lurched wildly.

"Faith!" she cried, hysterically, "'t is of England; how came it to St. Mary's without our knowledge?"

"It must have sailed by us in the night-time," said the man.

"And there is news from England, from my Lord Proprietor; mayhap the governor hath returned. Put the sail about, she may pass us by. I must have the news!" her eager eyes flew to the tiller and the sail as the men put both about. The ship loomed clearer. "Methinks it is the 'Elizabeth,'" declared Mistress Brent after long scrutiny.

The men with her assented. They had both crossed the seas in the "Elizabeth" with Mistress Brent, and knew every rope and sail of the great ship.

"In good faith it is, and well come, too. There will be tidings from England and the stores which I did order likewise, and the tobacco is all ready for the lading. We will make for our own wharfage; she will shortly be there. I'll not have the

sailors who handle my merchandise think me unmannerly."

But Mistress Brent waited the captain impatiently. He came, as she knew, brimful of news, news of England, where the king's affairs prospered not, though, what mattered most to Mistress Brent and all others of Maryland, the governor had come again to St. Mary's, sailing in his own good ship, the "Elizabeth."

News of St. Mary's. Giles had but returned from his jauntings and reconnoitrings, and the governor was well pleased at finding the affairs of the settlement so well in hand.

The shrewd captain had sailed back and forth for the eight years of the settlement's growth, and he knew its affairs as he knew his own; and he had fallen quick into Captain Giles's humor, the thing for which he had worn him thin and for which he had watched the river as if for the sail of one beloved. He would have the governor home again and begone at once to conquer Kent, and Calvert himself hastened the expedition.

The captain knew, too, and hesitated not to tell the Mistress of St. Anne's, that the goodly province of Maryland might shortly be all the Lord Proprietor might claim of his possessions, and that the manor of St. John's might be, indeed, his dwelling-place, and the governor had orders to keep all

in readiness. The Proprietor with his household might come hither at any day. Calvert must hold the affairs of the province well in hand.

All this and much more he told her, as the men unloaded her stores. Seafaring tales of West Indian hurricane and coast gales which had delayed them; tales of fierce battles and loss of men's lives whom Mistress Brent had well known; wild tales of cruel vengeance till she looked shudderingly about her and thanked God she had already taken refuge here, she and hers; tales of London and the poor trading there, for people were wild with fear; of these he gossiped as the great ship lay at the wharf of St. Anne's and the captain was an honored guest in the manor-house.

And the sailors unloaded their stuffs: cloth for the servants' wear, shoes and hosiery, brown cloth and half-and-half and coarse linens and cottons, hoes and axes and plow points for the farming, sugar and molasses bought in West Indian ports, and gin and rum and wine of Madeira, an oaken chest filled with fine wear for my lady of the manor, — full-trimmed skirts and flowered petticoats and bodices of the latest device and laces.

Sarah and Lucy and Mistress Margaret herself were agog with talk of the new fashions as the dresses were unfolded from their wrappings, and Mistress Margaret seizing an idle hour arrayed

herself in them. The skirts were not so sweeping nor so full as those of the year before, they found, nor the farthingales so high and stiff; here was even a collar of rich soft lace that lay low on the neck and bared the throat, and the sleeves were puffed out but wondrously trimmed.

Here were slippers high-heeled and buckled, and ribbons of sarsenet or lute, and handkerchiefs which were but meshes of dainty lace, and perfumed gloves; and here were the corals she had ordered for Rosalind, pink and carved beauteously they were; here was a silver tankard, she would give it to Mistress Hawley, willy nilly, and here at the very bottom of the chest was a thing to make her cry out with delight, a sweeping cloak of beaver, soft as down and thick set as velvet, that shone golden in the sunlight and shaded brown as her sweet-cured tobacco leaves in the shadow. She had had Giles and the governor choose the skins for her, and they had been nigh three years selecting them.

A whole delighted day she spent amongst her gauds and finery, forgetful of Maryland's and England's woes alike.

Slippers must be matched to gloves, and ribbons to both; this new fastening must be experimented with and this new ornament tried. This gown, now, this ball gown she had ordered when she

writ her merchant in London; she bit her red lip, — did the ladies of the town go so attired? in truth this bodice was but a hand's breadth! The skirt scarce swept the floor behind and showed her slipper tips before, this soft creamy silk with its full flounce at the hem deeply broidered in curious designs of scarlet threads, scarlet and gold thick intermingled. But the bodice! she held it wondering. "Surely there must be something else, some drapery of silk or lace?" she questioned.

"'T is just as it was packed," declared Sarah, "each piece to piece as they must be worn." She went to the bedside and lovingly fingered lace and ribbon. "Mayhap 't was this," she said doubtfully as she lifted a scarf of lace so fine Mistress Margaret could crush it in her hand, or yet swing it many an arm's length had she so minded.

"Aye, I 'll try it." Mistress Margaret disrobed herself and slipped into the glistening skirt of silk and the tiny bodice, stiff-boned. She glanced down at her bare arms and bust as Sarah bent to lace it; against the creamy tint of the silk they shone white as ivory. She took the lace from Sarah's hands and draped it about the bust where the bodice ended and knotted it loosely in front, but the lacy meshes marred the fair embroidery of the vest.

"You 'll e'en have to wear it as it is," declared

Sarah; "if it were not proper, they would not have sent it."

"Fashion must have gone far lengths there; when I was in London one's ruff turned high as the coils on one's head. Hand me the mirror, Lucy." She took it from her maid's hands and looked long and curiously.

The door opened behind her but she heard it not. "Faith!" broke in a deep, quick voice.

Mistress Margaret jumped until the mirror well nigh fell from her hand. "Giles," she cried, "la! an I had broken the mirror seven years of ill luck would have come upon St. Anne's; what a fright thou hast given me!" She came quickly and eagerly to him. There in the hall another waited, tall, soldierly, erect, a look of expectancy on his fair face.

"The governor!" cried Mistress Brent, forgetful in a moment of her strange attire. "How came ye upon us so suddenly?" she asked, when she had given him fair greeting and her brother likewise.

"Suddenly!" laughed Giles; "we came with the captain to the door and there was talking loud enough. I looked to see you every moment; the captain said you were within the house, but it lay deserted. I heard the voices in your chamber, and though I knocked, yet the voices

went on, and I ventured within, and thou —" he broke again into laughter, and Mistress Brent, brought to sudden consciousness of self, flushed from bare shoulder to curly hair.

The governor spoke quickly to cover her confusion and vexation.

"'T is a beauteous dress ye wear, such an one as I saw on my sister for the Christmas festivities," he said, speaking courteously and sedately enough, though his eyes shone with pleasure at the vision he had come upon. There in the cool hall where the tapestry shook lightly upon the wall, and the shadows of the oaks flickered without, where the river shimmered afar and the green edge of the forest peeped through the vista in the rear, there in the simplicity of his provincial life shone the fairest thing his eye had rested on in town or castle or court, the fairest woman, the wisest counsellor, and truest friend; though the governor's heart grew hot and impatient at that word of *friend.* He had returned to Maryland resolved that the high hand his brother counselled in the government's affairs should be used in his private doings as well. He was aweary of waiting and patience and *friendship.*

But Mistress Brent was thinking now of his speech about her gown. She turned to him eagerly.

"Is it such a fashion as they wear in truth? such a skirt?" she turned slowly, "and such a bodice?" though the flame flickered again in her cheek as she thought on the scantiness of it.

"Save for the lace upon it," said the governor gravely, though his eyes danced with merriment. It was like a play, forsooth, to stop for but a word with Mistress Brent, whom he had hoped to find in his own home on his return, to leave the gun-mounted deck of his ship where arms were stacked and soldiers stood in grim readiness and come on this peaceful scene and this brilliant figure in the heart of it.

"But about the neck," added the governor, "a band of velvet and such an ornament as this," and then for the first time Margaret noted a tiny package on the table.

The governor opened it quickly and took from thence a band of velvet scarce a finger's width in breadth and on it fastened a ruby heart; he turned the jewel to show her the gold plate at its back engraved with the Calvert arms. "Words are feminine, deeds masculine," he quoted, translating freely the Latin inscription written in minute characters beneath it, and Giles, a quizzical smile twitching at his lips, turned away to search for the captain, who lingered without.

Calvert, with fingers that shook somewhat,

stooped to fasten it about her throat, and when he had snapped the band in place Mistress Margaret felt another touch than finger-tips upon her neck, a touch that was hot and passionate and stung her from head to foot.

The governor had not dared — but the governor was a bolder man than he who had sailed to England in the autumn. To his prudence and caution and long-suffering had been added something of his brother's fiery energy and supple policy. Would he hold Maryland against all odds, he would hold, likewise, the fairest thing within her bounds.

"Thou wilt pardon me," he said gravely, bowing, "'t was no more than a kiss on thy hand, fair cousin," he lifted her hand gallantly, "and that thou wilt grant me in farewell;" he bent and kissed it ere Mistress Brent had time to vent her anger or to say more in her astonishment.

"Surely thou goest not now!"

"E'en now; we 've lost a good two hours, so Giles would tell thee, and when one goes a soldiering such loitering comes amiss. He 'd have me sail by St. Anne's without a greeting, but St. Anne's hath a magnet; scarce can it be passed. Once before, an ye recall it, I tarried as I passed; 't was to thy help, mayhap thy salvation, and now —" he paused, let fall the hand he

held, and picked up his hat. "Captain Brent," he called.

Giles wheeled in the doorway where he talked with the captain.

"We are ready," said the governor as he bowed low to Mistress Margaret and passed out.

Giles turned, a look of mischief and keen inquiry alike flashing in his hazel eyes; his sister's face, puzzled, astounded, amused him.

"Mayhap she may come upon something she thinks not of," he said to himself. "The governor is another man; she 'll not whisk him hither and thither, blow hot, blow cold;" but to that sister he was bidding a quick adieu, with the warning that he would come again, "Giles Brent, Commander of Kent."

XIV

MISTRESS MARGARET stood still in the hall where her brother had left her. The golden light of the late afternoon sifted through the oaks on lawn and pathway and fell in long slanting beams on the men walking hastily down it, — the governor, erect, assured, as Mistress Brent had never seen him; Giles, quick and eager; the captain, lazily good-natured. She watched them down the stairway, heard the creaking of the sails as the sailors loosed them to the wind ere she turned away. A vexed thoughtfulness was on her face.

"Here, Lucy," she called, "unloose me from this masquerading.

"Sarah, see to the arranging of the things within the store-room, Jock — "

"Jock will be abroad to-morrow," said Sarah, proudly; but Mistress Margaret, spite of her warm solicitude for her overseer, had no word of joy. Sarah looked upon her astonished, but seeing the absorbed look on her face turned away.

Lucy with soft touch unloosed the tiny bodice and lifted the gleaming skirt above her mistress's dark head and arrayed her in the paduasoy she had worn ere the fascinating trial of her new wardrobe.

"What shall be done with these?" asked the maid.

"Put them back again," said her mistress, carelessly.

"Put them back," muttered Lucy; "she speaks as careless as if — as if — " she could find no simile, but turned to a delighted fingering of gowns and ribbons and laces, and a slow folding of them together and replacing of them in the oaken chest; but Mistress Margaret went out into the hall as one who, thinking deeply, saw not the things about her. She wandered down the pathway to the bluff. There at the wharf lay the great English ship; there down the river, her white sails bellying in the evening winds, sailed the governor's vessel, the lowering sun struck bright flashes against the stacked arms and mounted guns upon the deck, and there in the bow was a gleam of gold and scarlet, she knew it for the dress of the governor.

Her gray eyes watched the fast-running tide wistfully, the wide beach bared by the low waves, the hazy line of opposite shore, the curve of the

land far up where the forest massed all shades of green in its fresh budding; the few short moments she lingered seemed hours, so heavy was her absorption, but suddenly she was roused by a song sung carelessly.

"It was a lover and his lass,
With a hey and a ho, and a heynonino!
That o'er the green cornfield did pass
In the spring-time, the only pretty ring-time
When birds do sing, hey ding a ding:
Sweet lovers love the spring.

"Therefore take the present time,
With a hey and a ho, and a heynonino!
For love is crowned with the prime
In spring-time, the only ring-time
When birds do sing, hey ding a ding:
Sweet lovers love the spring."

She looked down quickly; the sailor was eying her curiously, and Mistress Brent was suddenly conscious that the ship waited its lading and the captain had signified his eagerness to be gone. He had finished unloading her stores an hour or more ago. She was her practical self once more.

On the morrow, and many days after, she was hurried. The tobacco was already in hogsheads under the sheds: ropes were fastened about them and the men began the busy rolling of them to the wharf, down through the fields, along the

easy slope beyond the lawn to the wide, firm beach and the great hold of the ship.

Mistress Margaret could see them from the living-room, where she sat making up accounts, making out bills of lading, writing letters to London tradesmen and orders of stores to be delivered. There was no time for idle dreaming, only quick work for clear brain and clever hand.

The ship was soon ready for her sailing, and soon, too, the wharf lay deserted, after the busy life centred there; still there was no news from Kent.

Mistress Margaret found herself wildly impatient. She drove the servants on the manor mercilessly. From dawn to dusk she was abroad. The sickle of the new moon showed aright and the chestnut leaves were big as squirrels' ears; it was just the time the Indians had taught them for planting of the maize; it could not be done swiftly enough.

The men and women grew sullen over the long hours bending over the corn rows under the hot spring sun. Never had Mistress Brent proven a hard mistress till now. They cast sidelong, resentful glances at the stiff, resolute, little figure on Brown Bess, who haunted the fields, and who, did they but know it, was holding herself far more sternly in check than she held them, and was driven by the war within herself to urge them on.

Yet the servants made many a wish that Jock was well again, and were glad enough to have his white face amongst them.

"Gadzooks!" one of them swore, "an Mistress Brent had the working of us in the tobacco planting, we'd ne'er have stood it." And they were heedful of Jock's every word, and wrought diligently though the overseer rested often at the cool edge of the forest, nor had they word of jest for Sarah's anxious face when she came cosseting him with helpful drink or food.

They had only grown to dread the gleam of Brown Bess's satin skin or the shine of Mistress Brent's riding-gown. Then, happily, there came at last news from Kent, — a letter brought by the fellow who had come with ill tidings to St. Mary's.

Mistress Margaret was afield when they sought her with it. She had grown well nigh weary of waiting and watching with nerves ajangle, and had fallen into a dogged resolution of patience.

She was talking to Jock where he rested under a huge chestnut-tree of the tobacco planting which must soon begin, of how the plants throve in their bed, and what method of transplanting would suit them best, and how the soil had been prepared.

The corn was near done. The women in their loose shifts of coarse blue linen worked easily; the

men, bare-armed and bare-footed, wrought by their side. The air was clear, crisp, invigorating; labor was no task under such a sky. By and by, as the summer days sped by and the sun waxed blazing hot, and the sultry, close days came upon them, they would go about their work gasping and well nigh spent; but now, with the sky bright blue above them, and all the vast space betwixt the blue arch above and the earth beneath filled with cool, soft winds, while the crows circled lustily overhead and the buzzards sailed lazily far above, they bent to their tasks willingly.

Brown Bess was crunching at the green twigs near and Mistress Margaret pulled idly at the pink wild roses she had gathered.

"There comes Sarah along the pathway," she said, as she rose to her feet from the log on which she had been sitting and sprang into her saddle; "belike she hath a pannikin of ale for thee. Ye must soon be well under such ministering." She turned Brown Bess about. "Aye," she said to herself, "there she comes, and who would have thought on it a year agone? Not I, in faith! I 'd have sworn Sarah had no thought save of my own service. So do we deceive ourselves, in truth; no sooner do we begin to dream ourselves necessary to any than —"

She was abreast of Sarah's stout figure and

honest face, and Sarah's blue eyes were wide open and eager.

"I sought ye, Mistress Margaret," she began, quickly, "and saw ye in the field; and I thought I'd e'en bring Jock a draught of ale as I came," she said, apologizing for the tankard which she bore. She placed it on the ground and began to feel in the folds of her bodice.

"'Fore God, I trust I have not lost it. Ah!" she drew out a thick, folded letter.

"From whence?" gasped Mistress Brent, as she snatched it from her.

"'T is the seal of the Brents; James did bring it hither."

But Mistress Margaret heeded her not. She was tearing at the seal and shaking out the long folds of the letter. Her eye fell first on the signature, "Giles Brent, Commander of Kent."

"Please God," she cried, with a laugh that was half a sob, "they have won."

"And Captain Giles," pleaded Sarah, breathless for news, as her mistress had been.

"All is well, all is well with him!" Then Mistress Brent flashed her an impatient glance. "James hath already told thee. What," she could laugh merrily with the letter and with such news safe in her hands, "thou hast not gossiped with him. Get ye gone to Jock and tell him the tale."

She struck the mare sharply. She would reach the privacy of her chamber and read at leisure; words swam before her eyes here in this hot sunshine. Within the cool room she spread it out and read thus:

Giles Brent, Commander of Kent, to his sister Mistress Margaret Brent of St. Anne's Manor, —

Greeting.

Whereas we did purpose long ago to send ye news of us, and whereas now after long delay, more than we had thought on, we are peaceably settled once more in our manor of South Fort, where the governor and the soldiers who did company us are our guests and we are more at leisure, we do at once despatch our trusty servant to thee with these tidings.

The winds being baffling and contrary when we did leave ye, our coming to Kent was somewhat delayed; that night and day and night again we beat about the bay, 'til we and those with us were most impatient, for ye must know we were anxious about many things. Was the man Ingle yet upon the isle, we wished to know, with the great ship of which our trusty servant did tell us? Then must there be fight, we knew; and while we were in readiness for it and no man doubted the issue, so resolved were we to win, yet I did misdoubt me but what the governor thought on those sad affairs which befell early in the settlement of the province, when the men of St. Mary's and the men of Kent met in their

pinnaces on that stream which the natives do call the Wicomico and there closed in bloody fight whereby several men were slain.

And while the governor hath a valiant heart and a most excellent understanding of soldiery, methinks he dreads the fighting 'mongst ourselves, and would always use peaceable means an it were possible, though he was ready to fight, and looked with his own hands to the priming of the guns and the fittings of the weapons.

Yet were we glad when, coming upon the fort in the early dawn, we found the wharf deserted save for the small craft of the islanders. Nor were any about when we landed, so we were able to force the gate and post our men about their magazine and block-house, and send other forces against the settlers without ere they were yet astir.

Coming upon them thus they found resistance useless, and have once more come within our sway; though, in truth, their allegiance looks somewhat half-hearted, and methinks 't will be so for many days; still we have them now, and, having, will hold.

Then the governor leaving most of his soldiers here would fain go on to Palmer's Isle and have me go with him.

I had not before set foot on that small island, set most opportunely in the wide river's mouth, as if Providence had placed thereby a check upon the great savages who have their villages upon its banks.

The soldiers there were truly most glad to see us, for they had lived in exile and led a lonely life within the wilderness, and some did beseech the governor to let them return and leave others in their stead; and to those who did have mothers or wives or other ties within the settlement the governor lent a listening ear.

We did leave the garrison in good shape. It consisteth of ten choice shots, and we left with them a boat and arms and ammunition, and provisions and all things necessary, thirty pounds of powder, one hundred pounds of shot, twenty barrels of corn, one wherry or shallop, two iron pots, one pestle, swords, and a half pike.

They are well housed in the fort which Thomas Smith of unhappy memory had builded.

This being done we sailed again to Kent, where the governor tarries to hold a session of the court upon the island and to warn them to have ready their appointment for the burgesses to the next house of Assembly, which he hath already notified them will be held at St. Mary's some time within the fall — God be willing.

I have writ ye thus in full, knowing your anxiety and your great interest in us.

Ye will recall my last words in the hall of your house of St. Anne's, in memory of them I now subscribe myself

Thy Brother

GILES BRENT, *Commander of Kent.*

The governor kisses thy hands, and would fain wait upon thee on his return to St. Mary's.

Mistress Brent read and re-read, and then blessed the fates that made of her brother so ready a letter writer.

"Faith, he hath writ to the point and most concisely," she told herself; and she rose to put the letter in her desk, though she lingered when that was done, looking out the window to the shining river. Affairs in Kent settled peaceably, that was as the governor would have it; her brother reinstated, she gloried in it. Palmer's Isle well garrisoned, Kent in allegiance, St. Mary's quieted, — all was well in Maryland.

Then she thought again on the last sentence of that message, written hastily, as if in after-thought, "The governor will wait upon thee on his return to St. Mary's," and she smiled thoughtfully with the look of absorption upon her face which had settled often there in the weeks since the governor's hasty visit.

She watched for the returning pinnace with no thought that it would go sailing past her, as it did. Mistress Margaret was moved with wrath that he who complained he could never sail by St. Anne's without visiting its mistress, should now, after so long an absence, and after so adventurous an expedition, sail calmly onward.

But the governor had hasted too soon from St. Mary's after his long stay overseas. He knew it.

There was much to be done there, and then he would come pleasuring to St. Anne's.

Mistress Margaret's anger had time to wax and wane ere that time should come.

The pale-green corn shoots showed well in the fields, and the tobacco plants grew lustily and unfolded velvety leaves over the rich earth, the oaks were thick set with foliage, and Sarah's roses were abloom, ere such time came; and Mistress Margaret was ready to greet him gladly and add some words of chiding, words which it joyed him to hear.

He must tell her all of his Kentish venture, she declared, of the expedition to Palmer's Isle and the garrison life there; but first, he besought her to go with him to Captain Rogers. He had not seen him since his coming from England; there was business concerning his hundred he would ask him of.

It tickled Mistress Brent to the top of her mischievous humor to note the courtesy with which her brother-in-law received them.

The governor's pinnace was well known upon the river and had been already espied. Captain Rogers waited them with due ceremony upon his wharf, and handed Mistress Margaret ashore with much stateliness.

Mistress Rogers was within her room, he regretted she was unable to greet him; mayhap

Mistress Brent would visit her there, and Mistress Brent, glad enow to leave them to their own affairs, sought her sister.

Mary's cheek was flushed and her eyes alight. There had been rumors before of Margaret's attractions for her cousin, Leonard Calvert, but never so strong as now, when it was known he had even stopped his Kentish expedition to visit her, and had come again soon as he well could leave St. Mary's. Yet, though she tingled to speak of it, Mary was ever in awe of her older sister and dared say no word directly; though Margaret was well aware of her questioning look and eager alertness. But she made no sign, enjoying instead Mary's bright talk and, when she was again with him, Captain Rogers's hospitality.

"Faith, Mary," she declared, as she made ready to depart, "never have I paid thee a visit more pleasant, though I would my brother-in-law had let the children be with us and had not sent them so safe away to the servants' quarters ere we had come. I must see them ere we go, they are still busily talking." She listened a moment to Captain Rogers's brisk tones and the governor's low, deliberate speech, and then sped away across the yard to the back where cabins and stables were crowded in the palisade. Rosalind shrieked with delight when she saw her.

"Auntie, auntie!" she cried; "father said we could not bother thee, thou wouldst not be thinking of us!"

"Thinking of ye, indeed!" blazed Mistress Margaret, "I ever am. Now, come and see," she seated herself in the low flag chair, "see what auntie hath for thee, 't is e'en from overseas, 't was brought in the great big ship which was at her wharf," Mistress Brent went on to the delighted child who cuddled close to her and watched with wide-open eyes her aunt unfastening the chatelaine at her side.

"Now, did I not promise thee?" She unfastened a jewel casket she took therefrom, and Rosalind gasped and could find no words for her delight. There on the blue satin lay the carved coral pin for her throat and rings for her ears, carved in leaves and rose petals even to the stem.

Mistress Brent caught Rosalind's loose gown with the pin and hung the rings on the tops of her small pink ears. "There," she cried delightedly, "run show them to mamma."

"Father said we must not leave here 'til he be gone!" said the child, hanging back.

Mistress Brent fairly stamped with vexation, but she caught Rosalind in her arms and held her high so that Mary could see her, and then,

the imp of perversity seizing her, she called loudly:

"Cousin Calvert, Cousin Calvert!" She saw the governor come to the door and look wonderingly about him.

"Come hither," she called, "I would have thee see my fair niece and nephew;" and the governor, catching sight of her lithe figure and piquant face, walked quickly across the yard.

Captain Rogers, angered to the depths, for Mistress Brent had cut short some wise words wherewith he was seeking to impress the governor, slowly followed.

Margaret caught Rosalind, bejewelled, in her arms. "Now, is she not the winsomest maid in all thy province?"

"I dare not say thee nay."

Calvert laughed as he caressed the little maid hiding coyly against her auntie's shoulder.

"And this fellow," he called to the boy, "how strong and sturdy he looks, and a soldier already;" he saw the wooden gun, rough fashioned, the boy held in his chubby hands.

"Ah, Captain Rogers, thou art most blessed," said the governor, and he sat him down in the low chair upon the earthen floor and called the boy to him. That moment, had Captain Rogers known

it, was the flower of his visit; and seeing the governor's enjoyment of the children, her brother-in-law forgave Mistress Margaret her misdemeanor, and was filled, himself, with a pride that softened his humor to her for many a day.

XV

PLEASANT it was in the great living-room lingering by the board, white spread with damask of Flemish loom, where the silver glittered in the light of the sweet-smelling myrtle candles; pleasant it was in the wide hall, where the summer breezes blew fitfully and the tapestry waved lightly on the wall and the dusk was in the rafters overhead; but out of doors, where the shadows lay thick under the oaks and the fireflies gleamed in the grass, the witchery of the night was all abroad, though the sheen of the sunset was yet in the sky and its opalescent dyes lingered on the broad, murmuring river.

From living-room to hall and from hall to lawn they loitered, the governor and his hostess, adown the gravelled pathway to the bold edge of the bluff, and along its side to where the thicket hid the narrow entrance of the cave, and they fell to talk of that dire night when Mistress Margaret's household had found refuge there.

"Aye, had not it been well nigh impossible to pass St. Anne's."

"Had not the savages lighted a beacon would guide thee many a mile," said Mistress Brent, who would have no thought of such speech, "methinks Captain Rogers would soon have come to our assistance," she added, perversely.

"An he had, he would not have reached ye ere—" began Calvert, impatiently.

Mistress Brent turned suddenly, and her voice was low and sweet as she answered him. "He would not have been in time to save us. I have never thanked thee in set words such as I oft have framed in fancy. I will thank thee now. Truly, cousin, 't was a kind and watchful providence that brought thy pinnace down the stream at such an hour, yet—"

It was the governor's turn to look impatient and grow restive under such speech.

"'T was but a lucky turn of war."

"A lucky turn of war; and if that is what ye deem it—"

Then was the governor betwixt two fires: he would not be praised, nor would he anger Mistress Brent; instead, he blundered, "Thou knowest well there is naught, *naught* I would not dare an thou wast in danger."

Mistress Brent looked down, a smile curving her red lip, and it smote the governor suddenly, the thought of it, it was the first time that he

had ever dared a tender speech she had not cut in twain ere he had finished.

There was a feeling of sternness in his sudden joy; he had come home again, back to the province of Maryland, with strong intention nerving him, he would not be held at arm's length by his fair cousin.

"But I am not in danger," said his cousin, lightly.

The governor was silent.

"I trow we would have made good our escape," she added, perversely.

"'T was a danger too great for us to trifle with it now in words," said Calvert, gravely.

"Not so wouldst thou have others think," said Margaret, petulantly; "ye'd have them believe the settlement was safe; safe as a church."

"Others," broke in Calvert, passionately, "'t is not of others I think; what care I for them?"

"Everything!" declared Mistress Margaret, fighting her cousin's humor, now she saw the storm her words had raised; "so we did persuade them this winter."

"But thou, Margaret," and there was such a depth of pleading in his voice that Mistress Margaret, who thought she knew him through and through, was yet astounded, "why wilt thou keep

ever this distance betwixt us? it is not for always, it cannot be! Surely thou hast forgot that night many years ago." He came close to her, towering above her slight figure, "And thy words then; so much has come and gone since then, I—" he paused, for Calvert was ever distrustful of his own merits, "I—surely thou hast not found me altogether unworthy of thy loving, or in all these months thou wouldst have given some sign." He went on brokenly, drawing long breaths between the pauses of his speech; but his cousin's face was bent from him, he could read naught there, but must stumble on.

"Thou hast been kind and kinder, Margaret." She looked up at his appeal and smiled gently, though her face was white as the gown she wore.

"Tell me, is there any cause?"

"Cousin Calvert," she laid her hand on his arm.

He shook it off roughly and his blue eyes blazed.

"Cousin, forsooth, I will have none of it!" and at his anger something of her old assurance came to Mistress Margaret.

"Sir Governor," she began demurely, and then checked herself. "There is much I would speak," she said with some show of dignity; "and after—after, then I leave thee to judge."

"To judge what, Margaret? Could I, would I weigh aught against thee?" he protested eagerly.

"Nay, I know not;" Mistress Brent turned thoughtfully and walked slowly back to the stairway in the cliff. "Sit down," she commanded, "there is much I would say, methinks I owe thee this."

"Margaret," declared Calvert, stricken by the look on her face, "thou owest me naught; speak not; I love thee, I will love thee ever, sweetheart; leave all unsaid."

But Mistress Brent, though she drew her breath sharply, shook her head.

"Nay, it must be! Methinks that is why I so oft have fenced with thee; an I ever listened to thy words again I must tell thee this."

She clenched her hands upon her lap, the fingers tight upon her thumbs.

"I only pray thee silence 'til I be done, 't will make my task the easier."

Her gray eyes, dark with suffering, sought the paling river and the sky where the first stars of evening twinkled, as if for help, and then she began:

"Thou rememberest my father's house; the great lawns and gardens and woods where we came and went at will, and my wayward childhood. There was none to check me. My father

was all soldier; my mother dead when I was nigh a babe; my father heedless of us; only Sarah, and she not grown to womanhood. Giles was with my father most of all and held himself aloof; Mary seemed too small for comradeship. I grew as the wild things throve in the garden, and when teachers were provided — thou recallest good Father Moran; little heed he gave us save for a few short hours, and I learned readily enow.

"'T was bad enow," she declared passionately, "and yet I wonder, I wonder could none be found to look after two motherless girls, to teach them somewhat of the beginnings of womanly knowledge and not leave them all unfortified. Nay, start not, 't is not a tale of shame I tell thee, else I ne'er had lived longer than the knowledge of it." She broke off abruptly, and when she spoke again the channel of her thought was changed.

"But most of all," she went on dreamily, "most of all I loved the garden by the old part of the house, where the gardener was neglectful of his skill; thou recallest it?"

Calvert smiled; the brightest picture of his youth was of a dark-haired child who at last made friends shyly with him one sunny day and showed him the realm of her delight, where the roses grew in wild tangle and the wallflower and

cowslip in untended clumps, and the arbors were rotting and overgrown.

"Ah, yes," sighed Margaret, "there was the sunshine of my childhood; winter or summer, I ever lingered there!

"When ye were making ready your expedition," she went on hurriedly, "and Giles came from London with wondrous tales of what my cousin of Baltimore would do and what thou didst purpose, and of the men who gathered to the sailing of the 'Ark' and 'Dove,' of Father White's fever to be gone a-preaching to the savages, and my cousin Baltimore's great hopes of the new country which he would have so wisely governed, there was another with him, one who listened with me and told me other tales of venture, when he saw my wide-eyed listening, I was woman in stature and years, God knows, but in naught else. He found the garden pathways; the arbor, albeit half rotted, was pleasant lingering place, and he found withal an eager welcomer, pleased enow, easy enow; aye, let me speak the bitter truth and be done with it — easy enow and eager enow to give him her whole heart, to scorch herself with the fire of her loving, to fair consume the heart within her, to show him all, to be his plaything, and then, then —"

She rose to her feet and swayed as she stood

on the narrow stair, her white-clad figure shining in the dusk.

"He went away free as he came. Touch me not, not now," she pushed Calvert back, back to his seat. "My God! the days that followed, they withered my heart; there is no loving left there, none, I tell thee. I waited; I would not believe. My father spoke of his marriage one day, lightly and carelessly, as if of a thing that should move us not. My father died; Giles was bitten with my cousin of Baltimore's dreams; he would have me visit him; anything would have served, to be forever away; I seconded him gladly; Mary would come with us, why, we soon knew.

"Now thou knowest the secret of my caprice. I would have lands, forsooth, I would do unmannerly things; I tell thee 't was my salvation, it has saved me heart and mind. Think ye I should fear the savages when my own heart was the foe I had to fight." She sank back in her seat upon the stair.

"Think not I love him, the dastard! nor that I fought love of him; nay, 't was scorn I fought, scorn of myself, loathing!"

"Poor child!"

"Child! have I not lain bare the soul of a woman centuries old?"

"In sorrow, but naught else; and thou hast fought this fight here amongst us, amidst criticisms."

"Such as they were, they hurt me not."

"And e'en I have so misjudged thee, Margaret; I pray thy pardon."

"Pardon!" said Margaret, faintly.

"Aye, I thought I knew thee through and through. I thought I loved — is that all thy tale?" he asked wistfully, as if afraid yet to intrude himself where such sorrow had been.

"All? is not that enough?"

"Nay, save for thy suffering, 't is naught;" he leaned closer and placed his hand upon her tiny ones clenched again within her lap.

And Margaret looking down where he sat beneath her, his fair face alight with sympathy, trust, and a feeling deeper and stronger than all these, drew a long, quivering breath.

"Methought thou wouldst never care again," she began.

"I told thee at the first naught could change me, *naught*. Thou wilt think not of it," he pleaded, "but love me somewhat, sweetheart?"

Margaret shook her head. She was spent with the telling of her tale and had so spirit of coquetry left in her.

"I tell thee I fear there is no heart, no power

of loving left in me; 'tis so with some; they give their all in one mad burst of passion."

"Aye, but believe there is more left than one thinks of," said the governor cheerfully, though his pulses were bounding with joy; "thou wilt not stay my loving thee?"

"An ye will," said Margaret; "but the night grows cold," she shivered slightly.

"And thou art wearied." He rose to his great height, then stooped and lifted her gently and placed her slight hand on his arm, though he walked in silence beneath the thick shadows of the oaks. A mocking-bird, startled from his sleep, broke into song. Calvert smiled at the omen and yet held his silence, only when they stood within the hall he bent his fair head.

"Thou knowest the hunger and thirst of the heart," he said; "mine cries out. I have waited thee, love, so long, so long; surely now—" he bent above her and gathered her close and kissed her with such passion as moved her to the heart.

XVI

WHEN Captain Ingle had persuaded the settlers of Kent to rebel against the authority of Maryland, he acted with a knowledge of both men and times: of men, for the islanders were stiff-necked in the carrying out of their own intentions; and of times, for he knew better than most in the provinces how uncertain was the tide in the Proprietor's affairs.

Should the rebellion prosper in England, and he believed it would, the chances were slight that my Lord Baltimore, a well-known friend of the king, should hold his own on either side the water. This, then, was the time for redressing Claiborne's wrongs, and no sooner was the work in Kent well done than he sailed away on the coastwise expedition which had been his real venture in the New World.

When he returned, it was but to hear at Jamestown that Calvert had come again and sailed at once to establish his authority at Kent, and that Giles Brent was once more at South Fort, commander of the isle.

The captain was angered to the topmost of his nature, which was both choleric and quick. For more than fifteen years had he traded in the New World, from the West Indies to Jamestown, from Jamestown to Plymouth; along the coasts of wild lands unknown and unclaimed had he sailed. On many a trading expedition with the Indians far up the Susquehanna had he been with William Claiborne. He knew his settlement at Kent when it mustered scarce twenty souls till it grew to nigh two hundred, from the handful of men at the fort to the scattered settlements over all the south of the island, the building of the cooper factory, the setting up of mills for grinding corn and wheat, the erection of Claiborne's manor-house at South Fort and another at Craddock, the coming of the chaplain and the sending of their burgesses to Jamestown; all this before the coming of the "Ark" and "Dove" to the Potomac.

That Baltimore had claimed and the king allowed his claim for this land already granted, was the mighty reason that had turned him, Richard Ingle, to the side of the rebellion. A king so careless of his kingly rights as not to remember his kingly word was not the king for England. Well did he deserve the stings of the hornets he had brought about his ears, and while he was busied thus, they would see to their rights

on this side the water; aye, and when the men who fought the king were victorious, as Ingle would stake his life they would be, they would uphold him in all that had been done, even to the granting of further authority. It should be no longer a question of Kent, but of all Maryland as well. So he thought as he nursed his anger and sought William Claiborne in the house which he had built where two rivers meet and form the wide stream beloved of the savages — the river which he had named the York. Here had William Claiborne fought a great fight with the savages and routed them from their village, and here at last, holding a grant of the acres that rolled away from the wide York to the James, he had built a house and lived in state with the wife he dearly loved.

At St. Mary's the summer waxed and waned. The maize yellowed in the sun, the long leaves were pulled and stacked, the tobacco was cut and hanging in the drying-sheds. The colonists were hopeful. The season had been bountiful. The losses, when the smaller settlers had lost all save lands and buildings, were being repaired. With good harvests, with maize for use and maize for paying the quit-rents, with tobacco for the selling, all might go well.

Shipping was slight and lading was yet scant, save for the great manors. There was little news

from my Lord of Baltimore, and that little but his old exhortation set forth in fiery language; but his stinging speech, when he sank to such, moved the governor not. Never had he held the province in such firm guidance. Never yet had the New World brought him such happiness, — it was summer-tide in his life as well as in the land wherein he dwelt.

Summer-tide in all those delightful days when he could slip away to St. Anne's and find its mistress busied and happy, content dawning on her face, which had ever been too restless in its look, and which it joyed him to see. For he knew long before her speech that no wild love waited him, and for himself he prized the affection that grew slowly and yet from year to year, until some time, please God! his beloved might scarce know herself how deep it was.

When the leaves upon the oaks were green, when the leaves upon the oaks were bronzing, when the woodlands were filled with verdure and when they flamed in scarlet and gold, when, as now, they were filled with the down drifting of leaves which rustled in every wind that chased them underfoot or clung in pine or cedar, or in the twistings of the grape-vines where the wild grapes were purple and sweet — he journeyed to and fro.

Now the mocking-bird was gone with its summer kind, cedar-bird and robin were in his stead; the wild "cohonk" was heard overhead, and the marshes were filled with the flocks of ducks and geese that lingered on their journey southward.

Mistress Hawley had come for her summer visit and was again at home. Giles had come and gone again to Kent; the great manor was getting ready each day for its winter rest and quiet. Ere long the hogs and their keepers would be gathered in from the marshes, the cattle from far afield. Mistress Margaret's busy fingers held all the threads, and when the work was well done, she told herself, they would hold Christmas-tide royally at St. Anne's. Last year she had been in St. Mary's; next — nay, she could not yet say where next Christmas-tide might find her. Jock and Sarah would be left in charge for many a long day, in truth, an she became the governor's wife; and yet she loved St. Anne's in every fibre of her being, — better, far better, than that English homestead whose memory was blackened for her. She must talk of it to her cousin.

Her cousin! he would visit her on the morrow, so he had said by the messenger who came from St. Mary's not many days hence. It pleased her to think on his coming. The days grew solitary, or if the days were filled with work, the long evenings

were dull and tiresome; there might be song and laughter in the servants' cabins, but in the great living-room was silence and dusky corners and dark rafters overhead; the wind howled in the chimney and the tide raced, dashing, along the shore — there was no sound of life or cheer save the crackling of the fire.

It was well when there was a guest beside the hearth, and Mistress Margaret blithely made ready for him from the warning of the early morn to Sarah that her serving must be of the best, to the hour in the dusk of the short afternoon, when the governor kissed the finger-tips he held in his strong clasp and read the welcome of her greeting in her gray eyes.

"In sooth we are glad to see you, Cousin Calvert," she said, though her tone was warmer far than her words.

"In sooth, we are glad to be with thee, Cousin Margaret," answered the governor, though he laughed as he spake and pushed forward the great chair from which Mistress Brent had risen.

"Methinks the night will prove stormy," she said, turning quickly to light speech; "best have thy sails close-reefed and leave thy men to tarry with the servants in their quarters."

She went to the casement window to call to Jock as he crossed the yard.

"Jock, bid the governor's men ashore, and have them leave the boat in readiness for storm."

"Aye," answered Jock, looking shrewdly to the thickness gathering in the east.

"An thou art storm-bound?" queried Mistress Margaret, fastening the window-bolt and coming to the fireside.

"I am well content."

"And I," said Mistress Brent, her red lip curving mischievously, though she lifted her lowered lids but for the space of a second to note the happiness in the governor's face.

The governor rose from his chair and came over to the side of the mantel-shelf near her.

"Wouldst thou be indeed content, Margaret?" he asked unsteadily, for there were moments such as this when he had been long away when he could not think calmly on his happiness, it was too incredulous.

Mistress Margaret shrugged her shoulders. "Listen to the wind, how it howls in the chimney! 't is not a pleasant voice when 't is the sole one one has to hearken to."

Calvert was silent for a moment, looking about him at the rich carpet beneath the table, the square that covered it and the silver candlesticks there, the thick hangings on wall and draperies about

the window, the settle and chests and chairs of dark mahogany or carven oak.

"The governor's house, albeit the *governor's*, is not so fine as this," he said, half quizzically.

"Yet it should be," said Margaret, quickly.

"So it should, and the centre of the life of the colony; so my brother would have it."

"And such it must be," repeated Mistress Brent, sententiously.

"But it hath no mistress, naught but a bachelor with simple habits and few wants."

"Aye," laughed Mistress Margaret, "I have dwelt not within it for a winter not to know;" and though she laughed, the governor looked uneasy. He well knew he should look more closely to the fashion of his living. Truth, he had learned to do so in one way at least. Scarce Captain Brent himself went more gayly apparelled than he did since his return from England, though he would never look the man of fashion, — the thoughtful face and deep-set eyes would ever belie it.

But his uneasiness was only for a moment. "It shall not be for long untended." he declared, looking at the flaming fire, though he was aware of each change in Mistress Margaret's face.

"With a mistress at its head," he went on, slowly, "we 'd keep such revelry there this yuletide, we 'd draw the settlers from far and near to

the town, and not in such fear and trouble as when they crowded it before."

"Sooth, 't would be well," said Margaret, carelessly.

"'*Well!*' Margaret, dost know what thou art saying?"

"In truth 't is what I 'd pray thee do! 'T would be well for all."

She looked up and met Calvert's gaze. "What is it thou wouldst?" she began, bewildered.

"Where hast thou been wandering in thy dreams?" asked Calvert quickly, nettled that the speech to which he had led so gracefully had gone unnoted.

"I was thinking," stammered Margaret, "as ye talked of the yule-tide, I was thinking of the season here. I would fain have the men and maids make joyous revel; last year I was in St. Mary's, and — and next — "

"Next," broke in Calvert, and then left the finishing to Mistress Margaret, who flushed so rosily in the firelight he could not forego the sight of it.

But her confusion was but for the nonce.

"Faith," she said, lightly, "best make the most of what one has at once. Who can foresee the morrow?"

"To-morrow," thought the governor, and the

vision of it was bright as the flame lapping the oak logs on the hearth; and he was silent for a space, his fingers resting on Mistress Margaret's chair, whither he had come to note her sweet confusion. There where the brown hair curled upon her neck was where he had kissed her that day when he had ventured with his gift; she wore it now, and the collar, low and rich, showed all the curve of her firm neck. He fell to studying her face as he had done a hundred times before, the round cheek, rosy and firm; the long sweep of her lashes; the small red mouth and steady chin and smooth forehead where the wayward, dark hair, though high-coiled, would wander.

"Margaret," he began, softly, "thou hast begged the question. I did make a plea and thou hast naught to say; I put it gently then, now I must put it bluntly — for speech, gallant speech and I — "

"Thou canst write far better than thou canst speak," said Margaret, lightly; "thy missives — "

"What of them?" said the governor, quickly.

"They are within my desk," said Margaret, saucily; "would it please thee — "

"Nay, spare me, and hearken! Thou art a rare fencer, yet must thou listen. Madge, I beseech thee, why all these months alone here whilst I am in St. Mary's? Thou knowest not the loneliness.

The river betwixt us seems vast as the great seas — methinks thou mightest as well be across them."

"In faith, sir."

"Thou seemst so far away, in those days when I come not hither, and I cannot many a day when I would. Soon will be the meeting of the Assembly; I will find no time for journeyings then, I dare not." The furrow betwixt his brows deepened with the thought. The Assembly had been trying enough before, and now that the burgesses had arrogated to themselves the power of adjournment, he could not even forecast when the meetings would be done.

"I know not how long they'll linger; I pray God not 'til Christmas-tide. Then, the meetings over, could we hold revelry in the governor's house and keep the burgesses together and send them home, pleased and joyed."

Mistress Brent understood now, but she had no answer ready.

"I cannot," she said at length, "think not on it;" then seeing the look of pain on Calvert's face she hesitated.

"Think on it, Margaret, I adjure thee; speak not now, wait 'til the morrow an I tarry 'til then; I had purposed —"

Mistress Margaret, cut to the quick by the look on his face, had yet no word to say. Truly for

this man, now she had been won to a thought of giving her life into his keeping, a most strange feeling was growing, a feeling blent much of pity and much of sympathy. She knew how his brother held him, as a faithful servitor; and how many held him in England, as a man lacking all the brilliant parts of his older brother. She had come to the province prepared with these thoughts of him, added to a remembrance of a shy, quiet youth who had been often a guest of her father's house.

She had found a man of dignity and of stately manner; a man though slow, yet prudent; though silent, yet well loved; though surrounded with those grasping for new and better fortunes, yet doing naught for the aggrandizement of his own; though holding the power of granting the lands of the province, making no claims for himself; and when his brother had bestowed upon him the manor of South Fort, making a gift of it to another, and that other her brother.

Careless often, as he had been in his dress and his own affairs, he had been careless never of one of those about him. Yet few ever looked to give him pleasure. And Margaret, in the rush of pity for him, vowed there was naught she would not venture for him.

Each time he visited her, when she saw him first there was ever the mark of care and thought-

fulness upon him; she could watch as moment by moment the furrow faded from his forehead, the lines of his face were smoothed and the eyes brightened, until he looked as if years had fallen from him. She could interest him in a thousand ways, with affairs of the manor, of her household doings, with jest and laughter; and she had grown to look for the happiness in his face and to sheer from aught that brought a thought of care.

So it was now. She stole her slender fingers to where his rested on her chair and slipped them under his warm clasp. "I will think on it," she promised. "Hush!" as she saw the quick words forming on his lips, "here comes Sarah."

She pushed back her chair and rose to her feet. "Truth, cousin," she went on, striving to speak steadily, as she crossed to the window looking out on starlit lawn and river; "see," she called him to her side, "the clouds roll steadily up from the east, and soon the stars will be hidden, the oaks bend to the wind, 't will be such a night as one thanks God for shelter."

"And for shelter such as this," he looked meaningly at the bright room behind him and the slender figure by his side; and if the wind moaned, it had no sinister sound to him; and if tide and wind ran swift to St. Mary's, it was but for the

quicker journey on the morrow — the hour was his.

Though the storm howled over the house and shook the bronzed leaves from the oaks and scattered abroad the scurrying leaves in the woodland and tore the branches of the forest, and the rain beat on land and river and beat the requiem of the summer and its beautiful afterglow, the fire on the hearth blazed high and the candle-light shone on damask and silver and good cheer, and again on Mistress Margaret's piquant face as she sat by the fireside, her eyes bright with laughter, for she would have naught but fun and jest this night, and Calvert must bend himself to her humor.

Yet when the evening was done and Calvert slept the sleep of the well content within the guest chamber, Mistress Brent still lingered by the smouldering fire in the living-room. Much as she had come to think on her cousin's happiness she was not yet ready for the step he urged. She would rather have lingered and used herself more to the thought of it; a year hence was time enow, in faith, and he, she knew he grew impatient; yet, as he said, she had been a most excellent fencer and held him at bay. Now, Mistress Margaret sighed. Freedom was dear to her. Why could not they have gone on in the old way?

Why should every one urge her on? Why, last of all, had she learned this strange insight of Leonard Calvert's nature, to read the craving for love and sympathy he hid under his calm exterior and to feel she dared not trifle with it? Yet did she care for anything?

Yes, for everything. She threw her arms above her head, and the wide, loose sleeves slipped back, showing the gleaming whiteness of them. She cared for the world about, for her ventures in the new country, for every acre of her grant, for every tree in her forests, yet unsurveyed, for every friend she claimed within the colony and every household in St. Mary's, and for the man who slept that night under the roof of St. Anne's.

Her heart ached for him, and because of that ache and because she was well content to be with him, to feel his love about her caring for her, she would do as he pleaded. She would tell him on the morrow. Yet she sighed as she rose, the decision made, and blew out the candles and husbanded the fire, and made her way across the dark, draughty hall to her chamber, where Lucy waited her, asleep before the hearth.

On the morrow she was ready to answer the eager questioning of his eyes, though they met at the breakfast-board and Sarah waited on them. She saw the shaking of his fingers; the cake of

maize upon his plate untouched, though smoking hot and thin and dainty; the venison uncut, though it was of the tenderest; the smoking hominy and potatoes neglected.

"Sarah," she called, though there was a demure look of mischief in her eyes, "Sarah, what have you within the tankard, beer of our own brewing? An thou wilt bring me hither some of the white ale. Nay, call no one! Go thyself; the keys hang there." She pointed to the mantelshelf and busied herself with the food upon her plate until Sarah's heavy foot was on the cellar stair. Then she slipped hastily from her seat at the head of the board to the governor's chair.

"Sir Giant," she smiled bravely as she spoke, even if there were a catch in her voice and a tremble upon her red lip, "eat thy food in peace, it shall be as thou dost wish. Yes," to the quick question, "ere yule-tide. Shame!" for he had sprung to his feet and was crushing her close to him. "Sarah — unhand me!" she sprang back to her chair as Sarah's footfall sounded in the hall. And the governor as he smoothed the lace upon his coat wondered at the clear drops glittering on the velvet. Yet were there tears there, the face that looked at him from the head of the board was bright as sunshine.

"This cool weather moves one to hunger," she was saying, lightly. "Sarah, pour the governor a cup of ale, for me likewise."

Soon as the breaking of his fast the governor had purposed to be gone, but loitering was such delicious pastime, the morning was far spent when he set sail. The river ran rough and boisterous and the wind was somewhat fresh, yet the sun shone clear and the clouds huddled close upon the horizon; there was a draught of coolness, a touch of winter in the air, that set his veins a-tingle as they sailed, the pinnace heeled to the wind, the prow throwing the spray high in air.

Midway to St. Mary's they spied a small canoe beating outwards. The man shaped his course for them. The governor knew him ere he hailed for a man of St. Mary's, and there was something in his white, scared face that struck a chill to him ere they had come to speech. His tale was soon told, a tale so dread that Leonard Calvert, a second before its hearing, would have sworn it impossible, yet was it true.

Captain Ingle and William Claiborne had sailed that night to St. Mary's. The strong wind which whistled about the house when he had sat secure had borne them swiftly. They had slipped safely past St. Inigoes, and had trained the great guns of

the ship on the town. Should the people resist, the town would be bombarded, destroyed. They had submitted.

Giles Brent, they learned, was a prisoner on board the ship. Kent had been already conquered.

XVII

MISTRESS BRENT watched the governor's pinnace sail away with a strange feeling of restlessness which she stifled impatiently. She would see Jock. There was some question of the curing of the tobacco. They would go now to the sheds. The day was crisp, but underfoot was soft from the rain; she must have Brown Bess saddled. Once there Mistress Brent gave vigorous speech to the plans on which she had been thinking. The thick hanging stalks shut out all sound save of their own voices, so they heard no footsteps until one of the servants stood by them.

"What is it?" questioned his mistress, sharply.

"The governor hath come again and awaits thee at the house."

"Hath come again? What is the meaning of this?"

"I know not, mistress, Sarah called me to seek thee at once."

"Pray God," said Mistress Brent as she unfastened her mare from her tethering by the shed

and sprang on her back, "there be not some mischief afoot, though there hath been no time for tidings good or ill."

Yet her first glance at the governor's face told her there had been time for tidings, and those of the worst.

He waited her in the living-room.

"Cousin Calvert," she began, as she entered hastily. "Mercy o' God!" she cried, for his face was white and drawn and livid, "what hast thou heard? whom hast thou seen? Let me call Sarah to bring thee a draught of wine."

Calvert stopped her with a gesture.

"Margaret," he said hoarsely, with long pauses between his words, "when I did leave thee — this morn — I thought myself the governor of this fair province — and the happiest man therein — now," his voice rang sharply, "I have not e'en a home within it, not an acre of land is mine!"

Mistress Margaret tilted her chair proudly. "There is St. Anne's!" she said, quietly.

"God's benison rest on thee, sweetheart, for such speech!"

"Is there news from my Lord Baltimore?" queried Mistress Brent, a tinge of disdain in her voice; "hath he sent thither a new governor, or is he come in person?"

"Would God he had!"

"Then what?"

"I scarce can tell thee, it seems so incredible."

"What hath befallen?" demanded Margaret impatiently, who would know the worst and be done with it.

"Ingle," Mistress Margaret drew herself up sharply and her gray eyes flashed, "Ingle hath invaded St. Mary's!"

"And the soldiers of the fort, the men of the town?"

Calvert shaded his face with his hand as he leaned against the mantel-shelf.

"The ship slipped in last night, at dawn her guns were trained upon the town."

"Who brought the tale?"

"One of my household, most trustworthy; he had his boat concealed, he had been hunting for the wild ducks and would go again, he feigned, and he sought me with all speed. I met him in the river not many miles away."

"And e'en now he spreads the tale amongst my servants." She went rapidly through the hall to the open door.

The servants were grouped about the man agape with astonishment at the tale he told with much embroidery, of battleships and soldiers, and great guns would blow the town in atoms.

"Sarah," called Mistress Brent, "come hither!"

and then, not content with that, she hasted across the yard to the hard-trodden earth before the men's cabin.

"What tale is this ye tell?" she demanded, angrily.

"Sooth, lady," stammered the man, aghast at her anger, "'t is truth, St. Mary's — "

"Peace! I bid thee! hold thy tongue; 'til more is known of this, stop thy prating in my servants' ears. Why," she cried, as her anger lessening, she knew the man's face, "'t is William Rolan; bide with Jock and leave these idle fellows to be gone. When there is time for fear," she turned to the men, "ye shall have it from me — *from me!*" she stamped her foot angrily.

"Jock," she called him aside, "ye did not well to follow me and to leave the men to do likewise, now they are gathered as if — keep this man with thee, let him have speech of none; there is disastrous news an this fellow be turned loose with his tongue, 't will be bedlam come again. Come to me in the house when I have had further speech of the governor."

She went rapidly to the house. "So this fellow brought the tale."

"He is a most trusty servant, Margaret," reproached the governor, "and of them all the only one who thought to warn me, else, like Giles — "

"Giles!"

"Giles is a prisoner on board the ship."

Mistress Margaret threw herself into the chair by the table and commenced to beat with her slender fingers upon the heavy pile of the carpet which covered it.

"Thou seest, had it not been for him, I, too —"

Mistress Brent laughed shortly. "The commander of Kent and the governor of Maryland prisoners on board Captain Ingle's ship! faith, the sound of it tickles the ear! This pirate waxes bold."

"Pirate!" cried Calvert, who would be just spite of all else; "Ingle scarce deserves this."

"Yea, *pirate!* He would play the tricks upon the Chesapeake which he hath learned upon the Spanish seas."

Calvert was silent; for the nonce no action seemed possible to him, he could but dwell dully on the misfortune befallen him.

"And what is it?" went on Mistress Brent, her chin high in air, her eyes flashing, "what is it save piracy? On whose commission doth he act? What authority doth he show?"

"Nay, for that, the fellow doubtless thinks himself well backed; he is of the rebellion," he paused significantly, and in one wild flash Mistress Brent saw all he meant.

Her cheeks flamed as she sprang to her feet.

"And ye mean — he thinks — he can wrest this province now, and be upheld." She walked swiftly and angrily across the room, her fingers tight clenched upon her thumbs, her head erect. "We will match him," she cried; "piracy for piracy, an he hath taken possession of us," she laughed shortly, "we 'll steal our own again. There are the lords of the manors, the soldiers of the hundreds!"

"And thinkest thou, Margaret, one of them would move in our cause? nay," at her astonished look, "bethink thee, for all they know this man may represent the authority of England, an they resisted him they might lose all they had."

"Tut, 't is warfare, one cause against the other!"

Calvert looked at her kindling face, though there was no answering enthusiasm on his.

"He holds the heart of the colony," he said, shortly; "an we make any move — "

"'T is bluster, this talk of destroying the town should we resist! He thinks to frighten us, and he hath well done so," she added, bitterly. "How many soldiers could we command?" she asked, coming close to him where he stood beside the hearth.

"The soldiers of this hundred," said Calvert, quietly, "muster scarce forty men."

Mistress Margaret spread out her hands in a gesture of despair.

"And of them, how many could be relied on?"

Aye, there, she knew, was the rub. Of the settlers many were already disaffected toward the Proprietor; Protestants who, believing not in the religious toleration which was the foundation of their charter, would gladly overthrow a Catholic governor; these, too, believed the cause of the rebellion in England their cause, and hoped from it their own triumph. They were willing to concede to the English lord few of the rights he claimed, and fought his influence in the Assemblies and complained much of their quit-rents and poverty; and they would, moreover, make of the losses of the year before a pretext for any course, so it was the course of peace.

In truth, the blow was struck at the very moment of their weakness; even those friendly to them well might fear warfare. Should their holdings be deserted once more, their wives and children crowded into the refuge houses, their stock and granaries left to wind and weather and the prowling beasts who would soon find them out? It had been nigh to starving time

with them before, now it would be upon them indeed.

She knew so it would seem to them. They could depend on few. She faced the difficulty squarely.

"There is another question," said Calvert, "I know not what my brother would have, mayhap he would rather trust to diplomacy in London to be reinstated."

"What *he* would have! he knows naught of it, and ere he knows we will have acted."

The governor smiled sadly, as if he but smiled at her wilfulness.

"Truth, thou wouldst make a rare soldier, Margaret." But she noticed not the flattery.

"See ye naught to do?"

Calvert was silent. He saw not a hand's-breadth before him, yet could he not bring himself to such confession.

"At Jamestown?" ventured Mistress Margaret.

"Jamestown," declared Calvert, hotly; "none knoweth better than thou how they have fought us at every step; in this matter of Kent they persisted against us until the king's express command forbade them."

"There would be no help there." She went back to the chair and began her silent tattoo on the table. "I see naught, I see naught."

"And when Captain Ingle sends hither his soldiers, which, trust me, he will shortly do to all the great manors, ye will submit?"

"'T were useless for one manor to fight him."

"Even to surrendering me prisoner?"

"Calvert, how darest — and ye would sit still and wait such issue! I 'd hie me to the Indians and buy their aid."

"And have the savages to retake St. Mary's for *me!* rather would I never set foot within it again."

Yet Mistress Margaret's hot words had given a clue to his thoughts. "There are soldiers to be hired in Virginia," he went on slowly, putting the thought into words. "Nay," as Mistress Margaret began quickly to speak, "let me think on it a moment, my thoughts form slowly, thou knowest;" he smiled faintly as he walked to the window.

Out there the sun, though nearing the end of this most disastrous day, shone brightly; the oak leaves withered and dry, yet clinging to the branches, writhed and rustled in the brisk wind, and where the sun struck sharp against the river it glistened as though flashed back from diamonds.

Far out beyond the mouth of St. Mary's ran the broad Potomac, its southern shore but showing a dim, misty outline. There was his hope. Calvert

thought it out. It was a hazardous plan, and yet his only one.

He came back to Mistress Margaret. "Mayhap amongst the Virginia planters on the Potomac and Rappahannock I may hire me soldiers; they are far from Jamestown and will venture much for gain. 'T is the only plan. I must get me to them, and journey from plantation to plantation to get a force together." He sank in the chair opposite her. "But think, Madge, 't will be months ere I can come again, if then; and what happiness seemed mine! Good God!"

"Fret not, think not on it, only be up and doing!"

"Aye, I know; 't is no time for aught save work," he took her small hand and spread it upon the cover of the table, following the outline of each finger with his touch; "and 't is best! Sometimes thought is well nigh maddening, but not now, sweetheart, when I come again I 'll listen to no further talk of partings. There have been enough already, God knows."

He pushed her hand gently away and rose to his feet.

"I must be gone," he said, slowly and determinedly.

"Surely not now — to-morrow."

"Aye, now; no need to think and let the canker

eat the deeper;" Mistress Brent could stay him no further, the feeling was what she herself would have felt.

"Take thy man who came thither from St. Mary's with thee," she counselled.

"Nay, he has wife and children and must return to them."

"Then will I send him back with hopeful messages to thy friends," she said, firmly; "he must be cured of his fright, and return to tell them to bide quiet for a time. But some one must be chosen to bring me notice of thy movements."

"I will send one of the men who did bring me hither."

"And I will see those of St. George's and Captain Rogers and the lords of the manors; many will be found, trust me, ready to aid thee when thou comest, only — be not long!"

Calvert looked at her unsteadily. "Long," he muttered; then he drew himself up as a soldier should. "I will call my men," he said; and then when that was done and all was ready for departure, "Good-by, Margaret."

"Say it not in such fashion, what is there to hinder thy coming again and yet again?"

But Calvert only said simply, "I will send thee news of me."

"But thou wilt come some day?"

"Some day as I should, to take my own again; 'til then —"

"Say 'farewell' as thou didst this morn, lightly."

Calvert was quite himself again, the old, quiet self.

"I cannot, there is a great gulf fixed 'twixt then and now;" he came near, reading her nervous fright in her eyes. He lifted the hand he held to his lips. "'Til happier days, sweetheart," he said, and was gone. Gone ere the tears had cleared from Mistress Margaret's eyes. Far as she strained her sight the gleaming sail sped on, through sunset and dusk, pointed ever to that dim horizon beyond the river's mouth, across the broad Potomac, till the dark came down and hid it from her sight.

There was no word of him for many days. At St. Mary's all was as he said it would be. The ship held the town. Small forces were sent hither and thither to demand the allegiance of the manors.

Mistress Brent waited for them at St. Anne's, vowing in her heart they should have no oath of her. She watched the river daily, and when she saw them coming and knew well their errand she called Jock.

"Thou wilt receive yonder men," she commanded, "and entreat them courteously; say what

suits thee best, but for me, I shall get me to the forest. Not a word! I'd burst with spleen to see those villains in my hall; an I could fight them as I did the Indians, I'd do it gladly! But —I'd face every danger of the forest ere I'd have speech with them! When they are gone, come thyself to the edge of the far tobacco field. There'll be no lingering for them at St. Anne's, no revelry. Captain Rogers may see to that."

And she was gone. For Mistress Margaret was already head and front of the governor's party in the province. The man had been returned to St. Mary's, as she had counselled; his own fears had been allayed and he had been filled with tales of what the governor purposed to do and how soon he would return, only, he was cautioned, this must be done under oath of secrecy and to the governor's known friends. They must be told, likewise, to wait quietly, to do no violence, yet to hold themselves in readiness to aid Calvert when he returned.

To his friends amongst the lords of the manor she was prepared to send messages concerning him. There was coming and going all winter. Yet the governor's lot was far harder than Mistress Brent could think.

He had to go amongst men few of whom were his friends and few of whom were friendly to his

cause. Here and there he found those who entreated him kindly and fain would aid him, but found it hard to persuade others to the same mind. From plantation to plantation he went, sometimes nigh hopeless; and news from St. Mary's meanwhile was most disquieting. Ingle's ship was indeed gone, but the men he left were in possession of the town and, what touched him keenly, the manor-house of St. John's had been destroyed, burned to the ground.

Calvert could well understand with what hatred the men would view it. There, Thomas Smith, the prisoner from Kent, had been tried, there he had been executed; these men, his friends and avengers, would not leave a brick of it standing. The loss was heavy, and most of all because the records of the colony were stored there and burned with it. The stock the governor had been at such pains to procure would be dispersed and lost.

The governor in his exile could but set his mind more firmly to his purpose. His messengers came to St. Anne's again and again, and many times ere there were good tidings to be brought. Then came this note to Mistress Brent:

To Mistress Margaret Brent, —

Greeting.

Whereas we have sent oft to ye tidings as to how we fared, we now send one hither with news more to our

mind than any that have gone hitherto, namely, that we do purpose ere many days be passed to be again in St. Mary's. We have with the aid of our good friends of Virginia got together a sufficient force to contend with those that William Claiborne and Captain Ingle did leave behind, and do purpose to sweep them from our province. When this is done we will wait upon thee at St. Anne's. Until then may God have thee in charge.

Thine alway,

LEONARD CALVERT.

Mistress Margaret's heart was filled with joy that day. That a raw wind blew, and the river ran gray and sullen and the skies were leaden, mattered not. She must get messages to her friends and have them hold themselves in readiness, and then, hardest of all, she must play the woman's part, and sit still and wait while the actions she had planned went forward.

But waiting was neither long nor irksome. Scarce had a week gone by when she knew Calvert was come again to his own, the soldiers who held St. Mary's were driven forth, the men from the hundreds flocked to his help, and then, that they had sailed for Kent. It was then she looked to see the governor.

He might have come to her at the first, she had reproached him in her heart. Did he not know why he found the colonists in such readi-

ness to receive them? did he not know why his work was made easy? had she not writ him each plan and hope? had not his letters been full of fine speeches? and now he could not spare a day from his affairs, she argued, and was nettled thereby.

But Calvert at St. Mary's wrought furiously. His health had been much weakened by the life he had led in Virginia; he had been exposed in all weathers, he had gone from place to place urging the men to his cause and reaching where alone they could be touched by offering so high a wage that all he had stood pledged.

In the town itself was dire confusion; this must be straightened somewhat and he must be gone to Kent. And as Mistress Margaret watched the ships sail by, and knew her brother and lover were both on board and deemed they were alike neglectful, she was deeply angered.

Yet again the ships went by and she knew her brother was re-established in his commandery, and she was angered past the thinking on it.

She would go visit Mary — no, she would not see her in such mood and list her questioning on the governor's absence; she would bide at home, she would find something to do. And she found it straightway. There came a letter from Mistress Hawley. The governor was ill. He pleaded for her constantly. Would she come, and at once?

XVIII

MISTRESS MARGARET had not set foot in St. Mary's since she abode in the governor's house with Giles, two winters agone.

She strained her eyes to read the meaning of its streets and houses. The wharf lay idle save for the governor's pinnace, but lately come from Kent; the roots of the great white mulberry were deserted; the children shrank silently away as they went up the sandy street; and the dooryards were neglected, the houses unkempt, uncared for. Weeds grew rank where flowers had bloomed, the white clover thrust its head where English flowers had been tended, the women's faces she saw at door or window were dull and listless. At the governor's gateway she espied Mistress Hawley, her face was sadder yet than all the rest as she swung the gate open hastily.

"I heard thou wast come, and thought thee hurrying to my own house." She put her arm about Mistress Margaret and drew her within the yard. "I hasted to meet thee, though I should not have left his bed. Margaret!" Mis-

tress Hawley's voice, so calm and steady, broke suddenly as she turned her face quickly away.

"Is my cousin so ill?" queried Margaret, quickly.

"Ill?"

"Katharine, I did not think —"

"Nor did any of us. I wrote ye —" went on Mistress Hawley, incoherently. "He was worn, white, gaunt when he came back, with a fierce feverishness in his manner. His gentle courtesy was well nigh gone; he was short in his speech, impatient, and now and then racked with cough." They were near to the house as Mistress Hawley went on. "There was not a thought of friends; he never came nigh me. I saw him but upon the streets; he made quick work of all to be done, he would sweep the town of those insolent soldiers who swaggered here and would be gone to Kent; and now —"

She turned with an eloquent gesture of sorrow. "Do not look startled," she cautioned, as she helped Margaret lay her things aside in the guest chamber. "Come!" she led the way to Calvert's room. "Nay, sweetheart, pause a while, wipe that grief-stricken look of awe from off thy face, let not his eyes rest on such; wait here in the hall but a moment." She was gone, and came back with a draught of wine.

"That foolish housekeeper," she went on talking on indifferent topics and eying Margaret closely the while, "hath lost what little wits the good God blessed her with. Ye should see the keeping of his household." Mistress Hawley had scarce had it in her heart to leave him, such rough care had he come home to.

The color had returned to Margaret's face, though faintly. "Now, sweetheart!" She went softly down the hall to a door at the end and opened it gently. Within, the light was darkened so that they paused a moment for sight.

A great bedstead loomed heavily in a darkened corner, a table by its side was filled with candlestick and drinking-vessel and a tankard of some dark drink. At the foot of the bed cowered the governor's housekeeper, fat, indolent, sullen, and scared.

Mistress Hawley stood back as Margaret went forward close to the rumpled bed where the governor's great wasted figure lay; his lids were closed upon his deep-set eyes and his sunken cheeks were red with fever.

Margaret clenched her hands as a quiver of pity shook her heart. "He is asleep;" she motioned to Mistress Hawley, who went up to the housekeeper. "Ye can go to your duties," she whispered. "Ye must provide for us; Mistress

Brent's servants will bide with me, and she herself when not needed here."

Mistress Hawley knew well that the salvation of a household, where such sickness was, lay in the keeping as much as might be to its quiet routine; so she had thought to add, "Mistress Brent will be an hungered, see ye provide well for her, it grows already late."

She seated herself in the chair the woman left. "Sit down, Margaret," she whispered, pointing to a chair near by.

Margaret shook her head, her lips were a-tremble and her eyes misty with tears. Should he waken he must not see her thus. She walked unsteadily to the window; the battened shutter was ajar and showed a glimpse of green grass and tall trees and the creek which wound its way behind the governor's house, and the peace and quiet of it seemed an irony to the woman who stood there half-stifled with sadness. The long beams slanted lower and the quiet was yet unbroken in the room. Margaret came again to the chair by the bedside, Mistress Hawley waited at the foot, and the moments sped away. The room was close from its shuttering against heat and light. Mistress Hawley moved quietly to the window and opened it to the evening cool and sweetness.

"I like not this heavy sleep," she whispered, stealing to Mistress Margaret's side and pulling back the curtains of the bed for the fresh air to blow upon the sick man there. A long, low, slanting beam fell full upon his face, showing each sunken feature and the dread look that settled upon them.

"My God!" cried Mistress Hawley, and at the sudden sharp sound Calvert's eyelids flickered and opened. In the golden light by his side shone the face he had longed for bitterly through many desperate days.

"Margaret," he whispered faintly, and then a great agony shook him. Again and again he strove for speech. Mistress Hawley flew for aid; but when they reached him he but opened his darkened eyes, half raised himself to reach Margaret, and begged hoarsely, "Take all, pay all," and was dead.

What followed for many days Mistress Margaret knew not. It was but a daze of silence and great sorrow, of coming and going of grief-stricken folk, of the gathering together of the colonists for last honor to the well-loved dead, and then again silence and sorrow.

She was within the governor's house; she had never thought to leave it; she was his nearest of kin. By and by Giles would be come; they had

sent for him. Mistress Hawley tarried with her, and it seemed to the quiet woman a bitter fate which had left her the brunt of affairs whilst Margaret mourned. She longed wildly to be gone, to be within her own house; and instead, to tarry there, to see the coming and going, to answer the word of questioning or of kind inquiry, seemed insupportable. She felt she had reached the limit of her durance and must speak of it; she must make occasion to rouse Mistress Brent. And thinking thus she wandered without the house. The air within stifled her; she was tired of the day and its hard duties, tired of the warring within herself; and the cool fresh air, the sound of the incoming tide, the singing of the winds overhead, lured her farther and farther. The quiet and peace were heavenly, and Mistress Hawley drew a long breath of delight as she paused listening to that voice of the waves that calls and calls ever to its restless side, and then with its soothing speech of eternal things quiets the fever of the heart.

She needed the lending of her ear to its whisperings, for Mistress Hawley was well nigh distraught, and yet would have none look on her wound. Her mouth set itself in sorrowful curves; that restless tossing, that constant plaint was as if of her own soul, and she must teach herself,

though the moaning went on within, to look as placid as she had seen the river show in mid-summer heats.

She got up restlessly and went on, down by the little wharf beyond the house. One of the men of the governor's household was tying his boat and she paused to have speech of him, careless speech of wind or tide or weather; but the man had other and more serious thoughts, and voiced them suddenly.

"How long will it take for news to reach over seas?" he queried; "and who will take charge of affairs 'til Lord Baltimore be heard from?"

A great shock ran through Mistress Hawley's tall, supple figure as she turned away unanswering; she had not even considered it, who should be head and front of affairs until news could be sent to England and letters from the Proprietor. Who? There was but one, the governor's next of kin and his executor, Margaret Brent.

She went with firm step and eyes alert into the house. The twilight had deepened, and in the living-room sat a slender, inert figure given to the dark and to dark thoughts. She walked away, and came back as steadily as she had gone. She held pine torches within her hands, and flint and steel; and she stuck the torches in the holes upon

the mantel-shelf and lighted them and the candle upon the table.

"Katharine," protested Mistress Margaret, "the light blinds me, it hurts the eye;" and Mistress Hawley saw the lids were red and swollen, yet she had steeled her heart against soft pity. She went on quietly arranging the lights, and then she went behind Mistress Margaret, closing the shutters.

Again Margaret was fretful. "It is hot and close with all this light."

"We will need the light," declared Katharine, calmly. "Margaret, come over here beside the table. Where did the governor keep his papers?"

Mistress Margaret only shook her head petulantly.

"Come," called Mistress Hawley, sharply. "Ye know not? What is here on this table? Letters, instructions," she fingered the papers as she went on.

"Governor Calvert ever kept a litter of them there."

"Aye, when he was here to see to them. Ere he died he left his affairs to one who totally neglects them; what think ye he'd say an he knew these had been left to every comer?"

Margaret sprang to her feet as though she had been stung. "Katharine, it hath been not yet a week —"

"Since Leonard Calvert died," added Mistress Hawley, solemnly; "yet have men already become restless and begun to wonder what will be next."

"What will be next!"

"Where have thy wits been wool-gathering?" stormed Mistress Hawley, though her heart chid her at Margaret's stricken face and wild eyes beneath her heavy, swollen lids. "Who is to administer the governor's affairs?"

"I," said Mistress Brent, proudly.

"Mercy o' God! then when wilt thou be about it?"

Margaret ran her shaking fingers across her white face and then pushed back the damp hair from her temples.

"When the colony at such a critical moment grows faint-hearted for lack of a head, and the Virginia soldiers are swaggering in the streets and muttering for their pay, 'tis time the governor's administrator, an he had one, were up and doing."

Mistress Margaret walked across the room, her eyes gleaming with passion and her cheeks, that had been white many a day, aflame with anger.

"Ye will go to Deborah, Mistress Hawley, and bid her send hither the governor's mails."

She seated herself at the table and picked up nervously the first parchment her fingers touched, though it fair unmanned her; it was that map of

Maryland drawn out with plan of barony and manor. Here in this chair had she sat as she demanded of the governor her rights, while he stood by, a calm smile on his kind face. She laid it by. Here was the seal of Maryland; she held it in her slender fingers while her mind, quicker than its wont, awakened from its long inactivity, ran over the names of the men in the colony. Who should have the use of it? The power? Giles? Nay, there was a narrowness, a want of ripeness in his views; he was yet unfit. Thomas Gerard? he cared too much for the making of his own fortunes. Captain Rogers? she smiled sarcastically, and her own slender fingers closed more tightly upon it. She held it, by the governor's own choosing; there was none amongst them all — she knew it by the light of her own intellect — could stand so well in the governor's place, and she would stand there and prove it.

No one knew as well as she all the twisted strands of circumstance, the governor's hopes, the trial through which he had lately passed, and the Proprietor's wishes; the scenes were shifting rapidly, and for the nonce she would hold her own firmly.

Her face was as proud and her eye as cold as Mistress Hawley had ever seen them when she came with a box heavy as her hands could clasp

and put it and the key upon the table and waited silent for the space of a moment. Margaret made no sign, not even lifted an eyelid. She came behind her and slipped her arms about her neck and kissed her crimson cheek.

But Margaret scarce turned; she went on quietly with the sorting of the papers already on the table, and Mistress Hawley went away out to the opened door, where she sat herself down listlessly on the bench within the porch.

In the living-room, blazing with its lights, Mistress Margaret went on with her task.

In all the litter on the table was little of importance. She opened the box. Here were letters from my Lord Baltimore. She looked through them warily; many were of such nature as her cousin complained of. Why had not such things been done? Why was there not given him a full account of the stock on St. John's manor? Had the cattle he had bought in Virginia been brought thither? Why had no replies been made to his query about the iron foundry he purposed to establish in the colony? Were the treaties with the Indians yet concluded? Had Leonard Calvert obtained their relinquishment of all the lands the king had granted him? he would have the matter settled peaceably. Where were the Indian arrows? it were time they were sent to

Windsor Castle, as his brother well knew must be done each year in token of his fealty; he should not need the reminding of it.

"Good God!" muttered Margaret, as she thought on these and on the Indian troubles, the restless spirit of the colonists, their stormy assemblies, the trouble with Kent.

She went on. Here were lists of land grants; here memorandum of his indebtedness; here were notes received in his Virginia exile, one protesting the writer could not furnish the men he had promised; another, the men would not serve save for higher wage. In all the coil of trouble but one brightness. Mistress Margaret's red lips quivered. Here, apart, were all the missives she had sent him. She thought on their wording. Little there was of love and not much of tenderness in them; would God there had been some touch of affection! Had she but known how he had worked and fretted; but his messages to her had been of a piece with his oldtime stately kindliness, she had known not a tithe of the bitterness of those last days.

As she neared the end of her task, as paper and memorandum passed through her quick fingers and their purport through her quick mind, one strong, unlooked-for conviction forced itself upon her: Could all the governor held be turned

to pounds it would but pay his debts already accrued; the man who held the granting of all Maryland owned not an acre of it; the man who had begged for claims *for other men*, for trading privileges *for other men*, and opened to them the highroads of their fortunes, had not from all the venture bettered himself a pound!

She, too, had ventured all, yet with what returns? For her manor of St. Anne's, her buildings, her servants, her furnishings, she would not take ten times her first expenditure. She had known him, generous, thoughtful ever of others beyond himself, but this, why, scarce a colonist but had fared better, even Mistress Hawley, with her early widowhood and poverty, flourished thriftily.

But Mistress Hawley in the darkness of the porch had no thought of thrift, only a bitterness of heart, an angry jealousy that would not be stilled when she knew another hand made busy with all the secrets of Leonard Calvert's life.

She had kept the knowledge from her own eyes till he came home those last days, ill and needful of care, and she had ministered to him. She had thought with calmness on his wedding Margaret, the fitness of it, and had gone her way, not knowing the sorrow in her heart was not an old one. Now she knew, and face to face with the knowledge must fight it and lay it low. And busied with

her bitter thoughts the hours sped as swiftly as they did to Mistress Brent. Dark and evening and midnight settled on the town as they held each her vigil.

The stars glittered in the zenith and all the town slept; but by and by Mistress Hawley was aware of footsteps in the street, indistinct in the soft sand. The gate opened, the steps rang firm on the gravel, a figure alert, erect, loomed in the starlight, Giles Brent had come. He knew not the woman he had loved through his early manhood was fighting valiantly with the feeling which, unknown even to herself, had kept her from him as far as the stars above there in the heavens.

XIX

"GILES," said Mistress Margaret, the morning of the next day, "'t is necessary we should have a meeting of the colonists here in St. Mary's."

Giles looked at her thoughtfully as he twisted the pointed beard upon his chin. "'T will be difficult now, when the settlers are all busied."

"Aye, but it is necessary." Mistress Margaret's listlessness was all gone; though she was pale and worn she was as alert and her manner as positive as it had been. "I shall send the summons this very day."

"Thou?"

"In my own name. The governor hath named me executor; there are things I must attend to at once."

"Thou canst send my man James. He and my pinnace are at the wharf."

"I will see to the wording of the messages."

"Margaret!"

His sister turned inquiringly. She was already half way down the hall.

"Where is Mistress Hawley? methought she abode with thee."

"Only until ye came." She was impatient to be gone.

Giles followed with slow footsteps into the living-room.

"Madge," he said, hesitatingly, "last night Mistress Hawley appeared distraught."

Margaret shrugged her shoulders carelessly. "She hath her moods, God knows."

"Moods! now, if ever God made a woman who hath them not, but clear common sense —"

"Tut, and what man hath them not, likewise? I am tired of this everlasting prating of man and womankind; are they not of the same clay?"

Giles laughed shortly, "'T is what few women say; they'd never own themselves of *common* clay."

"For myself I feel somewhat less."

Giles's hazel eyes flashed dark and keen.

"Hath any weakness ruled thee?"

"Ruled, mayhap; rule, never!"

"Zounds! ye are not often so exact."

"Sooth, Giles, stand not quibbling. These must be writ at once. I would ye'd find your man James and send him hither. He must be gone to St. George's hundred. I'll send another to Captain Rogers."

Giles held his wide white-plumed hat in his hand. "Then I'll e'en be gone," he said; "'t is far better out o' doors."

Inside the room was cool and dusky, but with the look of emptiness and sorrow a house will wear when the head of it is stricken. But without the grass was emerald green; clovers lifted their white heads in neglected corners, shadows on lawn and pathway were dense, out in the street the sand glared in the bright sun, and Giles was glad to draw the wide brim of his hat lower to shield his eyes. The street was quiet, men were gone to the fields outside the town or fishing in the river, and the boys were tending the cows or hogs, or playing far along the shore. Giles lingered at the gateway, looking down towards the river and then upwards.

"Zounds!" he muttered, "'t is too hot to seek him on the sands; I'll wager a pound the fellow is at the coffee-house;" and he turned his back to the river and went on up to the crossing of the street, which soon grew at either end to a long green lane, and then miles away to a blazed track in the forest.

At the coffee-house some dozen of men were lounging about; the landlord stood in the door, and Giles passed close looking for his fellow.

The landlord started as he recognized him, for

Captain Brent had spent the first days of his sojourn under his roof.

"Captain Brent!" he cried, and in the eagerness of his voice was something more than welcome; "thy man was here this morn. I did look for thee."

"Is he within?" queried Giles, when he had answered the man's greeting.

"Aye, he is e'en now at a game of bowls. But, Captain Brent," the man bowed obsequiously, "I would e'en have a word with thee, sir; in truth, there is somewhat I would ask of the governor's affairs," he added anxiously, as Giles stood carelessly hesitating at the doorway.

"Step within, sir;" he looked around him quickly, about the open door and the tables near. They were crowded with soldiers, idly indolent; through the back door gleamed a bit of greensward on which the bowlers played, James amongst them. "Thou seest we have much company," he continued, with a sickly attempt at facetiousness.

Captain Brent barely nodded.

"They have been here this month," continued the landlord, sharply. "They eat, mercy o' God! they eat more than I can come by. I have a hunter ever in the woods, a fisherman on the river, my cellars are drained dry. These Virginians, too, I trust them not, they are ever too friendly

with Claiborne. I hear strange talk." The landlord grew fair incoherent with the fear roused by the thought he would convey.

"Ye would hint on league betwixt them," said Giles, bluntly.

"I — I hint at naught; but think, now, they drove the invaders forth, they held the town, they could do it now an they were so minded, they clamor for their pay, *they need but a leader to seize it some day.*"

"Aye," said Giles, "ye mean they'd overpower the town."

The landlord groaned, "Our lives would not be worth a ha'pence!"

"Tut, man, they be not such bloodthirsty rogues."

"Ye know not; they are devils, fair devils!"

"Has there been a word of this to any one?" said Giles, sternly.

"Not a whisper, a breath. I know not where to turn, and when I did see thy man, 'Mercy o' God!' said I, 'the captain has come again to St. Mary's; 't is him I will tell it to.' Truth, 't is well ye are come, sir, else who can see to such affairs now that the governor, God bless him for a good and noble man! —"

"Mistress Margaret Brent hath his affairs in charge," said Captain Brent, stiffly.

"A woman now," said the landlord, eying the captain stealthily.

"But one who will know full well the best to do," said Giles, loyally; "trust me thy score will be settled soon and the men out of thy sight. Lay thy fears to rest, man," he added, sternly, "and do not so much as breathe a whisper; ye know how such fears grow, 't would be ill for thy cause an ye did. Trust me, all will soon be settled to thy liking, and that of all, there needs must be time for the doing of it."

He turned abruptly and went out. "Send James to Mistress Brent," he called, and then, as if moved by second thought, he came back to the landlord. "A secret, sirrah, for thine own: we call a council at St. Mary's at once of all the colonists or their burgesses."

The landlord brightened even more than at Captain Brent's promises. He was used to promises, empty words, but this sounded like very fact; but ere he had time for speech Captain Brent was gone. He watched the slender, erect figure bravely attired in blue and gold, the wide hat and the hair curling low upon his collar, the quick turn of the head from right to left as he passed the tables where the soldiers sat idly smoking without the door. He swept his hat to them carelessly and then turned quickly up the street.

There was yet but one house on Mattaponi Street, beyond the coffee-house, — Mistress Hawley's. Giles's keen eyes gazed from door-yard to house and yard beyond. The roses bloomed in pink clusters about the door. The walnut above the spring was green with tender, sweet-smelling foliage. There was the flutter of a blue gown on the pathway, but it was a stolid maid; there was no sign of the mistress anywhere. Giles entered the wide-open hall; the board there in the back of it was bare and scrubbed to dazzling whiteness, the pewter candlestick struck back the light as if it were a mirror, but there was naught save silence.

He went out down the pathway to the dairy. He could hear the gurgle of the stream and the song of the mocking-bird in the walnut-tree, but the dairy door was fast locked. Mistress Hawley had come home in the faint, gray dawn, and had roused the men and maids and gone herself with them to the fields she claimed outside the town. He could but return to the governor's house to find Mistress Margaret still busied about her despatches, and hurrying James with many urgings and cautionings.

"These must be delivered first of all to Captain Thomas of St. George's hundred; with good winds — how serve they, favorably? Then ye

should be there ere midnight. Ye must then proceed to the manor of Delight still farther up the Potomac, and to Phillipps's Fancy and St. Gerard. Your mission should be done ere to-morrow's sunset. See ye tarry not."

Giles heard the caution and added some short, stern words of his own as James came without.

Truly it might be that things in the town were more serious than he thought. He would lay the question before Margaret, it was she alone could move in the matter, and he went his way to the living-room. The papers were pushed aside, and the quill Mistress Margaret still held was idle. Giles rested himself upon the table looking down at her.

The look on Mistress Margaret's face was still distant, as though she thought on things far away. By and by she looked up, looked again. "Giles!" she cried, sharply. "There is somewhat ye would say to me."

"I but waited thy speech," he said, quizzically.

"I was thinking —"

"'T is what ye need to do. Zounds! an all I hear be true —" he went on carelessly and exaggeratedly, bent on rousing her.

"What dost thou hear, tales hazy as the morning was?"

"And stirring as it hath become."

"Come, Giles, what is thy news?"

Giles went on, speaking at first carelessly enough, then, as he saw the intent look on his sister's face, in short, rapid words.

Mistress Margaret sat quite silent until he was done, and then for many moments afterwards. When she spoke he was fairly angered, it seemed so foreign to what he had been telling.

"Giles, the governor's horses are at St. Mary's; ye will be gone with me to St. John's. I will see that Deborah gives us somewhat to eat at once, and thou wilt see the horses be brought."

Through the early dinner and the long ride she had few words. Why should they go to St. John's, he wondered; but his eldest sister was well loved and much believed in, he was willing to do her bidding e'en to this. Up the sandy street they rode to the turn of Mattaponi Street, and then out, past the farm of Master Crown, past Courtenay's Fancy, though the way was now but ill defined, across green fields and through thick forests.

Mistress Brent drew rein sharply as she saw through the clearing woodland the blackened ruins of the manor-house. Instead of the great house which had stood there, there were blackened chimneys in sullen guard above a heap of ruins; fencings, barns, stables were alike gone; the

maize stalks stood in last year's furrows, weeds grew thick in the tobacco fields, no fresh-turned earth spoke of husbandry, but crows called and buzzards wheeled overhead. In all the provinces one would not light on a drearier scene.

"Now, pray God, Margaret, what hath brought thee hither?" asked Giles, as he reined his horse by her side and gazed with her on the scene of desolation.

Mistress Margaret was looking with wide, gray eyes on all the land before her; there it ran sharply to the bluff above the broad river, there it sloped to meadow and marsh land. Mistress Brent turned her horse's head to where the marshes shone velvety green. Sweet-brier and elder bloomed at the marsh's edge, and green cat-tails were browning amidst long, ribbony leaves; blue flags waved where the water oozed through, blackbirds flitted over them, song-sparrows, and a gorgeous bird barred in black and gold; it was the oriole, which went clad in the livery of my Lord of Baltimore.

But Mistress Brent had no eye for waving reed or nodding flag or flitting bird; instead she eyed sharply the narrow paths made here and there, meeting and crossing and winding in long, zig-zags far as the eye could reach. She urged her horse into the oozy soil and searched the paths

for marks; hoof prints of cattle showed there, and smaller mark of hogs and goats.

"Giles," she called back to him, "what care hath been taken of the stock the governor hath accumulated here?"

"None, I trow; the servants took refuge in St. Mary's when the place was burned."

"And no account hath been taken of the cattle here, I 'll warrant me."

"Claiborne's and Ingle's soldiers slaughtered them for beeves."

"Not all, I 'll swear; look here, and here," she pointed with the dogwood switch she held to the paths; "and this is not the only pasture land upon the manor."

She turned her horse's head and rode inland along the marsh's edge; here the land rose sharply to a tree-crowned crest, beyond it sloped gently.

Mistress Brent, who was ahead, drew rein and signed her brother to be silent. "There," she cried low and exultingly, "there must be the pay for those soldiers."

She pointed to the meadow, where, on green grass, by a trickling stream which ran down and fed the marshes and forced its way through rush-grown banks to the creeks beyond, there grazed a good score of cattle, — cows small and wiry, from their feeding on the marsh, and a wild-

looking bull who shook his shaggy head as if he already scented danger.

"Where be the elks, I wonder," said Mistress Brent, musingly.

"Dead long ago."

"And the hogs?"

"They 've taken to the woods and been hunted by the savages, I fear."

"Methinks there are some still upon the marshes."

"Come further along the creek," urged Giles, seeing now her bent.

"Ye will have to send trusty men to drive them to the town; there 'll be purchasers enow, mayhap some of the Council will desire them, and we will have the wherewithal to salve these dangers thou didst dwell on, for let me tell thee, Giles, the governor's wealth was of the scantiest. We have seen enough," she said, as their path brought them again to the marsh's side; "and there is yet another task for the day," she told herself as they rode homeward, purpose forming strong within her.

They passed the cowherds near the town, driving in the cattle from their common pasture; they passed the men and maids returning dusty from the work in maize fields or tobacco acreage; they passed Mistress Hawley, looking spent and grave,

for she had been all day overseeing her fields; she bowed calmly as Giles swept his hat and Mistress Margaret nodded carelessly.

Above the great forest inland the sunset light shone in wide red bars with pale, clear green between, the river ran yet tinged with opalescent dyes, when Mistress Brent came softly out of the governor's house, the folds of her long, rich gown held high in her slender hands. Her dark hair was coiled upon the head and stuck through with jewelled daggers, her bare arms and neck shone white and fair, dainty slippers crushed the gravel lightly as she passed, and her bright face, though it had lost its look of piquant coyness, shone with purpose and with spirit. Mistress Margaret looked behind, none watched her; she closed the gate and walked upward, then turned toward the coffee-house.

The soldiers were done with their suppers and gathered about the tables at the open doorway, smoking; dusky wreaths floated about their heads, the dewy evening air was scented with the pungent odor from their pipes. Through the window she could see the landlord idly standing, and the maids clearing the boards where men neither dainty nor well-bred had fed.

Mistress Brent walked on, her chin tilted in the air, her gray eyes dark and wide opened; she

crossed the sandy street, came quite up between the rows of tables, and paused upon the wide step of the doorway. There she turned and faced the men, who gazed upon her wide-mouthed with astonishment.

"Soldiers of the governor," she began in clear, ringing speech, and every man was silent, feeling her words were meant for him and him alone. "Soldiers of the governor, it hath but lately been brought to my ears that ye tarry here unwilling, waiting the settlement of your affairs, and in truth I should have already known, save — ye know well the sorrow which hath befallen us," and her voice sank, and each man felt his heart a-tremble within him. "We have been selfish and thought not of others, but he who brought ye hither and whom ye so bravely served, his last words were that ye should be paid," she was straining the point in the intensity of her feelings, "that ye should be paid to the last shilling. He did adjure me that I should see to it, but I," she spread her slender hands apart, "I have been forgetful. I pray your pardon," her voice sank gently; "but within the week the pounds shall be yours." Her voice rose clear and strong, "Within the week ye shall have yours to the last shilling, and get ye to your wives and sweethearts who await ye!"

And then, like a woman, her speaking done, she could not walk calmly again, as she had purposed, back to the street and down to Mistress Hawley's, but she must whirl within the hall and slam the door close shut and stand quivering behind it while the landlord strove to mumble, though his voice was fair choking, "God bless ye for rousing them all this day! Ye know not what danger ye have saved us from; they waxed desperate."

She had saved his coffers, or so she had promised; and she had saved them from worse things, he knew. But Mistress Brent had pushed past him and gone flashing through the hall, her long train upon her arm, and was running through dew-wet grass which soaked her dainty slippers and silken hose, along the pathway trodden to the cold spring beneath the walnut, to Mistress Hawley.

She fled unseen by the men about the doorway, who were silent, thinking on her, or talking with great oaths of her words and promises, — fled to the thick shadow of the walnut. The slam of the dairy door and the grating of the lock broke on her ear. Mistress Hawley, slow and sad and weary, walked up the hillside; Margaret sprang upon her, her white arms trembling about her neck.

"Forgive me, Katharine; forgive me, I pray

thee! I have done much to-day that thou wouldst have me do."

And Mistress Hawley drew a long quivering breath of relief. She scarce had known herself how heavily the anger of her friend had weighed on her.

XX

WHATEVER she had thought of her woman's charms, her woman's heart sank within her when Mistress Brent thought on the council she had summoned. Not one of those who would come thither but knew well the tale of the past years. They knew her friendship with the governor, mayhap they guessed at more. With her sorrow fresh upon her, she knew no impulse could save her now, no gay flauntings turn men's thoughts as she would have them, she must go her way as bravely as she had ever done.

Once, in truth, her heart sank in a very panic of fear; it was as she peered from her chamber window in the governor's house, where she still abode, and watched the tall figure of Thomas Gerard coming up the gravelled pathway. Giles was by his side, and the early sunlight, for the sun was newly risen above the river and chased the morning mists from street and field and forest, shone on the tall, stern figure. Mistress Margaret knew the brave deeds he had done when a soldier in the foreign wars, she knew how well he ruled

his manor, — as a king should govern his country; she watched his serious face as they paused for a space at the porch step, and through the heavy morning air came snatches of their talk. She clenched her hands nervously.

There were other footsteps on the gravel, and others; the crunching rang in her ears. Was the whole province come hither? She turned away resolutely to the window at the other side of her chamber and leaned out in the morning stillness.

Here she could see the chimneys adown the street and the thin smoke wreaths that spoke of morning duties; the air was filled with dewy scents of roses and sweet clover, mocking-bird and robin and wren sang in the branches, and the mists were fair gone from the river.

The hour was late, she faced about proudly and went with firm steps along the hall.

Was there any sinking of heart as she entered the big living-room and saw the many men assembled there, they saw it not. She knew them all, those who had favored Calvert in his exile and aided his return, and those who held themselves lukewarm; yet she greeted all as those who mourned, and she laid before them the questions which beset her and petitioned their assistance.

Did one of them remember in his quiet hours

afterward her round cheek aflame with earnestness and her brilliant eye and low, searching voice, her quick, incisive speech? Did one of them recall her account of the governor's behest and how their hearts had been moved within them at her simple words and downcast eye, or passing from that to her speech as to her pressing emergency, to her account of the menacing Virginians, while the men were astounded that they should have been so careless as to such dangers? Did one of them remember how she had carried them with her from the first moment when she had entered the living-room and they had ceased their talk to greet her?

There was a word for each man; did they think to condole with her, she had words already framed for asking of their own affairs.

When she asked their will as to the use of the governor's seal, Sir Thomas Gerard was quick and none gainsaid him. Calvert had left her his authority, and so it should be until there was time to send overseas and learn the Proprietor's will.

She questioned them as to the selling of the cattle from St. John's; they pledged their willingness, and would buy readily and pay such price as would necessitate the selling of but few.

Never was a council so harmonious held in the colony. They had been ever ready to take issue

with Leonard Calvert, to claim their rights and assert their freedom from much Lord Baltimore claimed. Now, in common danger and common sorrow, they were united about the slender woman who consulted them. They would hold the province together; would be in readiness to meet the savages who were recovered from their losses, were eager for revenge, and might take advantage of their weakness to fall upon them; they would pay the Virginians and send them peaceably away.

Sir Thomas Gerard, sailing homeward, thought of it all; thought, too, of the heaviness with which he had obeyed her summons, of the dissensions he knew of amongst the colonists and feared might break out there.

"Aye," he said, whimsically, "she is the only man amongst us all who could have done it."

He knew not then how soon he would be called to defend her, nor how valiantly he would do so.

As for Mistress Brent, she set herself vigorously to the carrying out of the plans she knew Calvert had cherished, and more beside. In less than a week she watched the Virginians sail homeward; she was here and there in the homesteads of the town heartening all. Men were encouraged to go vigorously about their affairs; the summer's sailing had set in, and ships were being loaded at the town

and at the wharves of the manor-houses; the season was favorable, and maize and tobacco flourished. In all things Mistress Margaret prospered save one. She must depart for St. Anne's, and would have Mistress Hawley accompany her; but Mistress Hawley was obdurate.

"Katharine," she begged, "I ne'er saw thee so spent and worn; pray God ye be not failing with the prevailing sickness. Thou art all unfit to tarry here alone. Come with me to St. Anne's."

Katharine put her pleading by with scarce a word. It was impossible, she declared, when further pressed; she could not leave when it was so necessary she should bide at home and see to the business of her fields and dairy. And Mistress Margaret fell to wondering on the old subject of Mistress Hawley's living.

There was not a woman of her station who wrought harder; the indenture of most of her servants had been passed, yet had she sent for others; here and there were new furnishings, the house looked not so scant as of old; the work of her hands prospered. Yet Margaret took it to heart that she would not go with her. She went puzzling over Katharine's mood, even to asking her brother about it. But Giles was well nigh as moody as Katharine. Mayhap there had been words of his own in protest, and she had flouted

him as she had done his sister. Both must go and leave her, — Mistress Brent to come again and again, to bide in her house as she took heed to the affairs of the colony, but Giles to see her no more until he gathered with the burgesses of the colony called to Assembly.

Letters had come from overseas. My Lord of Baltimore was wroth even beyond the powers of his biting speech that at such a crisis in his affairs, when he could scarce hold his own in England, the settlers should have acknowledged a woman as his representative, and then, as if it needed but a spark to fire his glowing anger, that woman should have laid sacrilegious hands upon his cattle carefully gathered at such trouble and cost. Little did he reck that her doing so had saved him from such close danger, that her prompt action and quick judgment and wise conduct of affairs perhaps preserved his colony to him; he thought but of the cousin who had bided with him, and was furious that her slender hands should have held the reins of his government.

And these letters must be read and acted upon and answered.

"Right Honorable," wrote Gerard for the men of the Assembly, possessed alike by a very flame of anger that the Lord Proprietor should so have belittled Mistress Brent and so berated them.

RIGHT HONORABLE, — Great and many have been the miseries, calamities, and other sufferings which your poor distressed people, inhabitants of this province, have sustained here since the beginning of the heinous rebellion first put in practice by that pirate Ingle. Now all is past and calm, and the whole province in perfect subjection again under your lawful government and authority.

As for Mistress Brent's undertaking and meddling with your Lordship's estate here, we do verily believe, and in conscience report, that it was better in her hands than in any man's else's in the whole province, after your brother's death; for the soldiers would never have treated any other with that civility and respect, and though they were even ready at several times to run into mutiny, still she pacified them; and she hath rather deserved favor and thanks from your Honor for her so much concurring to the public safety, than to be justly liable to all those bitter invectives you have been pleased to express against her.

After such warm championship of her cause, Mistress Brent purposed a step the burgesses had not thought on.

The Assembly yet held its meetings, and though she was no longer the Proprietor's representative, still was she Calvert's attorney and one of the largest landowners in the colony. She who was a week ago the head of the government would demand, now, a voice in the Assembly.

The morning of that January day was bitter cold. Mistress Margaret, her morning meal finished at Mistress Hawley's board, shivered as the icy blasts howled about the house and blew the flickering flames far out on the hearth, and bent and curled the red light of the pine torches stuck in the mantel-shelf to aid the sullen light of early dawn. Mistress Hawley herself made a little exclamation of dismay at the howling blast.

"There is storm and snow abroad, Margaret," she said; "thank God we can bide indoors to-day."

Mistress Margaret was silent; and Katharine, who had learned much of her moods, knew from her darkened face there was some warfare and strife within.

"Margaret," she protested, as Margaret pushed away her plate, the food scarce touched, "thou hast scarce eaten a mouthful; surely thou hast not finished? This venison is tender and toothsome, or there is cold capon within the kitchen."

"Nay, thy fare is of the best;" she pushed back her chair absent-mindedly and went over to the window-pane and breathed upon the ice fronds and wiped them away with her handkerchief of lace. Outside, the stiffened rose-bush rattled against the casement; the snow drifted over the door-yard; down the street, gray and ghastly in the early morning light, the fierce wind whirled

the powdered snow in clouds. About the coffee-house it had blown in great drifts, and the close-shut door made it seem a house deserted; but as she looked the door was thrown open; she could see the red light shine out in the snow, and men, wrapped in long cloaks close drawn about their faces, their wide hats pulled low, came hurriedly out. There was Thomas Gerard, stately and soldierly; there was Thomas Wair from the Potomac; there was that rank, disaffected Hammond; there was Richard Preston from his new claimed manor on the Patuxent; there was Giles, she knew his quick, firm walk, and straight, slender figure; there was her brother-in-law, Rogers. She rubbed a bigger space with her hot palm on the pane and watched them around the curve. She well knew where they were going. The sunrise gun had sounded and the gun for the half hour afterward, though the morning was too dull to know the sunrise save by the hour. They wended their way to the fort, in which they would hold the day's session of the Assembly.

But yesterday she had sat amongst them, their honored head; to-day, to give full edge to her bitterness, a heavy step came crunching beneath the window. Jock, foreman and holder of property upon her estate, was bound thither likewise; he, now, had a right to sit in the sessions and add

his voice to the vote. She crushed her thumbs to the palms of her hands as she turned about.

Mistress Hawley was gone from the board; through the open door she could see her, as one in mental disquiet will see and note each detail they gaze on, unknowing how clearly it is for all time imprinted on their minds; she saw Katharine's tall figure at the kitchen fire, the haunch of venison on the spit, the cook but newly brought from overseas gazing stolidly at her mistress as she cautioned her as to the basting and browning of it. Margaret, too, gazing at her face, noted with a shock of surprise how slender the figure had grown, how thin the outline of the cheek, how big and bright the deep blue eyes. Then, as if each detail were never to be forgot, she saw the sanded floor, the rough bench near the fire where the servants rested in the eventide, and caught the scarlet gleam from the loops of pepper overhead and the silvery sheen of the ropes of onions.

Yet the long look was but for a moment. Mistress Hawley reached for a leaf of sage and a sprig of savory from the low rafters overhead, and Mistress Brent turned and went quickly to her chamber in the attic. There on a wooden peg behind the door hung her rich fur cloak; here were heavy boots. She slipped her feet

from her slippers; they were icy cold from the draughts along the floor, but she heeded it not, though the corn-cob coals were red upon the hearth, and fastened the thongs of her heavy boots. She looked quickly at her dress; the brown paduasoy, short of skirt and slashed about the bodice with scarlet would serve her purpose well. She thrust her arms into the warm thickness of her cloak and drew the hood about her resolute face.

Down the stair and out the hall she made her way with word to none. Outside the icy wind caught her and fair whirled her off her feet, but Mistress Brent threw back her head and smiled at the wintry touch. She was bent on contest, and contest with the storms but whetted her humor. She noted with keen eyes every drift and curious whirl of snow along her way, and saw how heavy the smoke hung over the wide chimneys of the coffee-house; saw the rift which came in the clouds toward the east and the long rays of the sun showing fanwise through it, and the crows flocking overhead, and thought on the Indian saying that augured from such, — windy weather and a clearing sky ere nightfall.

By the governor's house she made her way and noted its deserted look, for Deborah kept to her kitchen, and save for the servants it was unten-

anted. How heavy the snow drifted against close-shut door and window, on shrubbery, tree, and vine! but the path by it and down to the fort where the Assembly-men met was well trodden. The creek was still and mute beneath the icy coat that could have borne the huntsman to the snow-covered forest beyond an he had not been busy in the meeting at the fort.

She put her hand upon the buttoned door and without a moment's thought was within; nor did she look to right or left or heed any curious glances as she undid the fastenings from her cloak and slipped the hood from her dark, roughened hair. That done she looked about her steadily: one had been speaking who made pause at her entry, and in the mute astonishment of the Assembly resumed his seat. This was the time for the utterance of those flaming sentences which had burned within her all night.

"Gentlemen," she said firmly, and there was no sound in the room save her fresh, clear voice and the howling of the wind outside, — "Gentlemen, I come to claim a vote in this Assembly."

The newly appointed governor moved anxiously in his chair, and Giles, after one shrewd glance from face to face, turned his keen gaze upon the glowing logs at the far end of the room, whose heat scarce took the edge from the bitter air, so

that the Assembly-men sat for the most part with their cloaks about them.

The silence grew painful, until Gerard rose courteously. "Mistress Brent," he said, slowly, "'t is against the terms of the charter of Maryland."

"And wherein is this stated?" she asked, quickly.

Gerard hesitated for a moment, but another, in quick, raucous tones, was answering for him.

"'T is so expressly stated in the laws of the Assembly."

Mistress Brent's gray eyes flashed full on Captain Rogers's face ere he sat down.

"The laws of the Assembly," she said scornfully to herself, but she dared voice no contempt for such here.

"What would my Lord of Baltimore say to such?" asked Rogers, from his seat.

"My Lord of Baltimore, Captain Rogers," she said, quietly turning to the speaker, — it was not the first time she had heard his voice in combat, — "my Lord of Baltimore is a lover of justice; think you he would grant manorial privileges to one to whom he was unwilling to give a voice in the Assembly likewise?"

"To what woman," called the same raucous voice, "hath he granted that privilege save his kinswoman?"

Mistress Brent turned upon her brother-in-law one flash of her great, dark eyes; she would husband her anger and not show it now.

"How many women," she asked steadily, "are within the provinces tending their own affairs peaceably and sturdily and might serve as ensample for many?"

There was a note of keen delighted joy in Captain Rogers's voice as he sprang to his feet and fair shouted, "Aye, but amongst the first laws made in this Assembly was the one that no woman should hold property in this colony, and should she inherit it, and at the end of seven years be still obstinately unmarried, that property would be confiscate. Why hath that law been neglected because the governor — "

"Shame! shame!" came the cry from many quarters.

The flush died from Mistress Brent's cheek, though her voice was clear enough. "Such law touches me not," she declared proudly; "I hold special privileges from my cousin of Baltimore, and I thank God," she went on, her voice rising somewhat, "that the papers conveying such intelligence to the governor were not amongst those destroyed in the fire of St. John's Manor, but are e'en now in my own possession. Concerning the last," she drew the bit of lace she

held crumpled in her hand across her mouth that trembled slightly, "*obstinately unmarried*, I need not speak."

Giles looked about him quickly once more. There were few faces in the room but showed some feeling, but feeling was not conviction.

Mistress Margaret went on rapidly:

"Gentlemen, well may ye ask why in all the years I have been amongst ye I never thought on such step. I thought not on it. I have been content to go my way. One, I knew, was at the head whose wisdom would remember each one of us. I had ventured amongst ye, and no man in the colony ventured more, for I staked all I had, and whether I have succeeded or lost I leave ye to judge. Then by one great loss the questions of your government were forced upon me. How have I met them? Is there a man amongst ye, God knows I say it not boastingly, could have done aught more? Did I not find the province shaken? Had not my Lord Baltimore's authority been disregarded and the laws ye yourselves made set aside for nigh two years? Who amongst ye favored the invader 't is not for me to say.

"Did I not find chaos, rents unpaid, accounts unkept, invasion of savages threatened, and menacing soldiers within the town? Ye have seen my

accounts, how stand they? What did ye say in the letters ye writ my Lord Baltimore yesterday? Did ye not say in such words, no man of all would so have wrought it? And yet, because I am a woman, forsooth, to-day I must stand idly by and have not e'en a voice in the framing of your laws, a voice in the making of those regulations which shall govern one who is amongst the largest of your landowners.

"Is this justice? I ask in the name of years yet to come. Ye have prided yourselves on being the only colony within the New World which grants to every man the right of worshipping his God as he wisheth; ye boast of your liberty and freedom and are proud that ye lead the way in the right, lead it in this likewise, build wisely, grant us justice, and let the woman who hath equal risks with ye in this new province have an equal voice in the government, else is your boast as empty wind."

She made impressive pause, and Gerard, who fain would have seen her success, moved in the next breath that the Assembly should vote on this question which Mistress Brent had raised.

Yet when the question had been put to such test she stood defeated. Giles and Gerard moved toward her, but she put aside all sympathy and

drew herself proudly erect. "Then," she cried in clear, ringing tones, "I do hereby protest against all this present Assembly and all its doings, unless I may be present and have voice as aforesaid."

XXI

MISTRESS HAWLEY waited her impatiently. "Margaret," she began quickly, "what wild whim moved thee to be abroad? Why shouldst thou go a-visiting?"

"Visiting," cried Mistress Brent, with a laugh that was short and bitter, as she went past her in the living-room. There stood her chair before the fire where Katharine had pushed it when the morning meal was done. She sank into it now.

"Thy skirt is wet with snow, and thy cloak, thy shoes! Lucy, take Mistress Margaret's wet things from her. Margaret, go upstairs and change thy dress. I will make thee a hot posset."

"Aye," said Margaret, bitterly, "dry clothes and a hot posset; 't is all a woman's fit for, so a man thinks."

"Now, pray God, what madness is this?" She caught Margaret's hand; it was cold as the snow outside, though her cheek was flaming. "Margaret!"

"Katharine, make not a pother!"

"Thou hast ill news! Surely none are come hither from Jamestown with tidings from England."

"Cannot ill news come save from England? Methinks Maryland reeks with such."

Mistress Hawley could make naught of the matter, but like a wise friend bided her time. She hurried Lucy to her mistress and bent, herself, above the kitchen fire mulling a measure from her small store of Madeira, adding sweets and spices until it was ready for the drinking; then when it was smoking hot, and sending sweet odors through all the house, bore it up the stair to Margaret. She had hoped to find her cuddled upon the soft bed, warm covers heaped upon her, but she stood white and erect before the brightened fire where Lucy had undone the bedraggled paduasoy and taken it off her benumbed mistress. She turned and took the bowl eagerly; it had already cooled enough for drinking, and she drank it to the last drop, and the color came flickering back to her round cheek that had gone white after the first few moments within the house.

"Thou hast a rare taste," she declared, lightly; "for one so abstemious; thou shouldst try thine own cure some day."

Mistress Hawley shook her head, "Is there aught else?" she queried.

"Now, faith, Katharine, thou seest I have got a hurt and would fain cosset me; 't is beyond thy healing, sweet. 'T is not of the body, methinks," she added, mockingly; "'t is neither of the heart."

Lucy finished her mistress's toilet and gathered up her bedraggled clothes. "Take them to the kitchen," she commanded, "and dry them there."

"Thy boots had best be softened with greasing," added the careful hostess, "else thou 'lt never be able to wear them again."

"Aye," said Margaret, absently. There was a warm fire on the hearth, and she held her wide skirts daintily as she put out her foot to the heat. "Aye, Katharine, I had best tell thee; 't will be town talk ere the morrow." She stopped, then blurted out hastily, "I did go to the Assembly this morn and claim a voice in the house. Look not so astounded. What have I done for well nigh a year?"

"And they —"

Mistress Margaret shrugged her shoulders. "They would have none of me; no woman's voice must be heard in their Assemblies."

"But what wouldst thou?"

"Katharine, tell me, prithee, who is better fitted to make the laws of this colony, Jock or I?"

Mistress Hawley was at a disadvantage and knew not what to say.

"For myself," she said, slowly, "I wish no such power. I have work enow; 't is much to tend the servants."

"Aye, and trim thy ways so as to meet all winds, blow they fair or foul."

"So do we all."

"So do we all; and why? An that iniquitous law which Captain Rogers did quote in the meeting, that no woman should hold property in the province longer than seven years, were carried out, ye 'd be not so placid!"

"Seven years!"

"Now I touch thee! Thinkest thou such law should be made an women had a right in making them. Katharine, 'fore God, look not so; why, no man thinks on it now; 't is madness, such folly. I dared them to their faces." She did not tell her how or in the name of what authority she so dared. "It grows cold here!" Margaret was frightened at the thoughtlessness of her speech. "The living-room is far better, and, faith," as she went down the stair, "the odors of the kitchen are most inviting. Now, I bethink me, I ate but little breakfast."

The hint, as she intended, roused Mistress Hawley.

"Truth, 't is fair eleven; thou shalt have thy dinner at once."

Mistress Hawley was too busied all the day for idle dwelling on Mistress Margaret's speech. "Pray God it was as she said," she thought, "and no man dare take her own from her," and she put the thought resolutely away.

The winter day seemed but a few hours long; a gleam of sunlight at noon, thickening clouds, and then, slowly at first, but ever thicker and faster, snowflakes that filled the air and wrapped the room in gray, sombre dusk save for the firelight.

"Art not tired, Katharine?" asked Mistress Margaret as she walked restlessly to the kitchen door. The men and maids were already housed, and Jock, sitting in a corner of the rude settle by the fire, looked up hastily, as she spoke, at Mistress Hawley. Mistress Brent caught his glance; it was so full of some hidden feeling — was it, could it be pity? — that she stood sternly gazing at him. Jock shifted uneasily. He remembered the scene within the Assembly-room, and Mistress Brent did too. "To allow a privilege to my overseer which was forbidden me," she said, as she turned quickly away; but ere she had crossed the room there was a loud knocking at the outer door.

Mistress Brent turned and made a sign to Lucy, who went to open it. In a moment Giles was with her.

"Ah, Giles!" cried his sister, as she slipped her hand within his arm, "methought thou wouldst come to me. How wet ye are! Give Lucy thy cloak."

She helped him unfasten it, and it was not often she bent herself to such tasks; but her brother took it quietly enough, there was that in his mood and thought which rendered him forgetful of trifles.

"Thou didst come to me at once?" said his sister, half questioning.

"I tarried but a space at the coffee-house. Hath any been present, any of the town?"

"None save the servants, and Jock," she emphasized the last of her sentence bitterly, "newly returned from the Assembly meeting."

"Where is he?" questioned Giles, quickly.

"Within the kitchen."

"Hath he had speech of Mistress Hawley?"

"How should I know? Yet why not, she hath been busied in the kitchen dipping candles."

"Margaret, she — hath seen her since —"

"Since, pray God —"

"Hath spoken to her within the half hour? How looks she?"

"But as she ever does. I will call her and let thee see for thyself," she began, mischievously.

"Not now, I pray thee."

"Giles, is there any new note of trouble thou art about to sound?"

"There was a stormy scene in the Assembly-room," began her brother.

"Methinks I witnessed it," broke in his sister, ironically.

"Thou didst fling a torch amongst us."

"Pray God it may set ye afire with some sense."

"It kindled a conflagration ye little thought of."

"An it inflamed ye, ye needed it, forsooth."

"But not as thou wouldst have it, not — "

"Now, cease thy riddles; thinkest thou I am set on puzzling matches?"

"Captain Rogers — "

"Aye, my brother-in-law, I 'd like to have struck him through and through; a pretty gift of oratory he hath developed; since when did he come by it?"

"'T was fatal enow spite o' thy words! When thou wast gone" — Mistress Margaret watched him eagerly — "when thou wast gone this woman's question needs must be further aired. Captain Rogers waxed eloquent beyond thy guessing. 'Into what length the women of the colony had come,' he declared; 'here was one had arrogated the supreme authority, and to what had she brought them, what scathing words were those of the Proprietor' — "

"He had naught to say of that before."

"Aye, he declared he had held his peace; the thing was done, the matter closed, he had said to himself, but now time had come for the expressing of his thoughts."

Giles twisted his mouth into a sarcastic smile such as often sat on Mistress Brent's red lips when she was angered.

"I spare thee the rest, Madge, but his speech was violent enough and fierce enough to arouse the rougher humors of us. God knows they be too many, we lack a gentle strain. But the upshot of it all is, they have set their faces firmly against all power in women's hands, e'en to the holding of property. They can do naught against thee, Madge, they acknowledged such, but," his voice sank, "*there are others*," and the brother and sister gazed at each other in stricken silence.

"What," came a cheerful voice from the door of the living-room, "ye linger in the dusk! ye look as if plotting treason!"

"She knows naught," whispered Giles, quickly, "I would fain have the telling; there is more."

Mistress Hawley came briskly across the floor. "The lazy varlets," she declared impatiently as she took the charred stumps of the pine torches from the holes in the mantel-shelf and stuck fresh ones there and stooped to light a splinter of pine to

fire them with. Giles saw the clear, sweet face shine in the firelight, the red curve of the lips running upward as though she thought on happy things. Such a passion of longing shone in his face that Margaret grew sick at heart; such heart hunger had she seen in another face, but the eyes in which it shone had sought her own. She turned quickly away and made a gesture to Giles, a gesture of sympathy and understanding, as she went out of the room.

Mistress Hawley turned to light the candles on the table. "With such a storm without we must make comfort within," she said, cheerily.

"Stay," said Giles, hoarsely, as she went about the room. A shiver of fright ran through Mistress Hawley's tall figure; twice that day had they come to her, her friends, with ill tidings writ on their faces. What, now, was this?

"Margaret said thou wast wearied," said Giles presently, in firmer tone; "sit thee down." He pushed a great chair before the fire blazing on the hearth. So seldom she allowed the slightest waiting upon her that it pleased him, even with this feeling of suffocation upon him, to push the chair on to the great rug of bearskin where her feet would rest warm on the soft fur and the blaze of fire and torch would shine upon her. How the coils of her hair glistened! How fair her white

hands shone against her dark gown, though he knew their palms were roughened with work!

"Hast come to confess thy misdemeanors?" she asked, carelessly; "thou lookest most serious."

Giles smiled spite of his anxious thought.

"Were I to confess," he began, ardently.

"Ah! Father White tarries so long amidst the Indians thou hast forgot," she began, quickly.

"One forgets when there is naught to confess," said Giles coldly, angered that his speech had been parried in such a fashion.

Mistress Hawley moved uneasily in her comfortable seat. Was it a sigh parted her red lips? "True," she said, and spite of all the words pressing upon him Giles was silent. The wind went whistling about the house and moaning in the chimney's mouth, and they could hear the dash of driving snow against door and window and the rattle of the stiffened rose-bush and the moaning in the tree-tops.

Giles began again quite at the other end of the tale he had to tell.

"Did Margaret tell thee aught of this morning? Aye, well she might, 't is spread through all the province ere now."

"Nay, St. Mary's —"

"Then thou dost not know a little bird of the air carries our news for us; faith, it must be the

sea-gull, its wings are so swift and strong." He stopped his chaffing instantly. Mistress Hawley was leaning back and listening to him with eyes wide-opened and amused.

"There was a stormy scene when she had left us," he went on hurriedly; "they would have no woman's authority. Mistress Brent had questioned them proudly as to those who should frame the laws of the province; should it not be done by those who owned the land?" He paused and went on low, "There is an old law, nay, not so old, but never yet enforced —"

"That no woman should hold property within the colony longer than seven years," cried Mistress Hawley.

Giles nodded. "Aye, I was not present at the making of it, thank God."

"And now?"

"Now they would force it. There can no woman again demand the right my sister did or taunt them with such language, so my brother, Captain Rogers, hath put it. The laws will be made by those holding the lands, and the lands will be held by the men.

"A cutting of the Gordian knot as wise as Alexander's," he added; and though Captain Brent spoke bitterly, his speech was not half so shamed and angered as he felt. He dared not look at the

woman upon whom the blow had just fallen; he would grant her a moment's grace, though there was much he purposed to say, and say at once.

"And I," said Mistress Hawley, her voice a-tremble with emotion; "and I, — is it possible? Can a man do aught so unjust? Then was Margaret right. To defraud me, — it is robbery! All I have about me — how hard I have wrought! — when I was urged to go back overseas to bide with my husband's people," —

"Think not of it," broke in Giles, sternly.

"Never! not there; I know not if there be a household there prepared to receive me. 'T is as Margaret said," she cried, her voice ringing with scorn; "ye have forced this rank injustice upon us."

"Not I, nor many more of us, but the larger number of votes will have it so."

"Then should we have a voice, as she hath said! How many a man will go to his wife this night and tell this tale, while she sits uncaring; it moves her not."

Giles's face flushed hotly as she thus put it. "There," said he, slowly, "is the touchstone of the difficulty. Madge stands absolved, but thou, why shouldst — "

"To strip me of all my years of labor," went on Mistress Hawley, not seeing the drift of Cap-

tain Brent's speech; and Giles, seeing how bitter seemed her burden, spoke boldly.

"There is a way of avoidance. The law runs, 'Lest a woman be married ere the seven years be passed.' Art thou so cold-hearted thou never hast thought on such? Thinkest thou that thou art ever to go through life alone? Hear me now; I have been silent — silent, God knows how long. I knew myself what I was in thy eyes when first we met, a youthful popinjay whose heart was fixed on lace and velvets. I swore the years should teach thee something else; I feared no rival." Mistress Hawley flushed hotly. "Thou wast ever cold enow to every man." She sighed with a breath of relief. "I have watched thee through how many years dost thou reckon? Seven years did one of old serve for the maid he loved, and seven again. Nigh to that score have I come. I have seen thee a slim girl bowed with sorrow, yet not crushed. Thy widowhood was fresh those first days of our stay, and thou didst deem me naught save a lad and a fop. Think not I did not see the gleam of laughter sometime in thy eye as it rested upon me, yet, methinks," he added gravely, "I have disproved that last oft and again, and that first — one ages early here," he passed his hands through his thick long locks, "the gray is already here.

"Katharine," he besought, "marry me and cut this coil."

"And so make use of thy love to help me out of my difficulties?"

"As thou wilt, but make use of it. Is there no moving thee? Is thy heart indeed of ice? I'd swear 'twere not! Give me but leave to teach thee!"

He leaned close and unfastened her clasped hands. The color came and went in Mistress Hawley's face, the red lips trembled, and Captain Brent seeing it, took heart of grace.

"See!" he knelt close beside her, "but place them here, sweetheart." He put her arms about his neck. "An thou wilt not speak to me; *speak!*" he crushed the folds of her gown against his hot face in an agony of fear lest now, at last, he had lost. But there was a soft touch on his head, a voice low and hesitating.

"Captain Brent," — he trembled like a woman and yet was silent, — "a man oft tells a woman," she went on brokenly and hesitatingly, "how many a maid he hath loved ere the perfect blossom of his love be come, but the woman, nay, she must love but one.

"I have been once wedded," and the man at her feet felt his heart would cease its beating did she not hurry her words; but he had had his say,

please God she should do likewise, and whatever it was he would bide by it; and in the silence he was aware of the howling wind and beating storm. "I have been once wedded," she went on, firmly, "and was true wife. Again there was one — be still and listen — that had he loved me and not thy sister — look not so incredulous. I put it from me from the day of his death. I scarce knew, myself, before, I but faced it to fight it and conquer it. 'T is dead, a thing of yesterday, forever."

But Giles had risen to his feet.

"So 't was this," he began, coldly; "and I thought there was none, and spent my heart in loving thee. Fool! not to know a woman's heart was not forever cold, and if 't was cold to me 't was warm to some other."

"Did I not tell thee — "

"Enough, thou didst tell me enough. I will not force myself upon thee again. I will seek Margaret." He strode across the room. "My God!" he cried, ere he had reached the door, "I had forgot." He turned; there huddled in her chair was Katharine, and surely no tears could ever bedim her clear and steadfast eyes!

"Katharine," he cried, going back to her, "tell me — "

"Tell thee what? Did I not bare my soul before thee to be scorned?"

"Scorned!"

"Aye," she blazed upon him passionately; "I would not tell thee; first thou must know—"

"Would not tell me—speak truth or never again 'fore God!"

But Mistress Hawley was obstinately silent, though cheeks were flaming and red lips a-tremble and lashes wet with tears.

"When that love was buried, as thou didst declare, didst think o' me then?" He lifted her downcast face. "'Fore God thou lovest me, *me*, Katharine, else—" His keen gaze searched her face, every blush, every curve of it; he crushed her close to him as he heard her ask, "Hadst thou never a thought of others that thou shouldst have been so angered?"

"Of none, sweetheart; 't is not always needful that many loves should bloom, as thou hast put it; nay, look not so! I am content;" and in the silence of their delight there was no heed of moaning winds or rattling casements or shaking doors, or of that one which opened and shut again, as Mistress Margaret, tired of her own gloomy thoughts, sought them, but went quickly away again.

She was glad, glad at heart, she told herself. Katharine's questions were answered; but for her, cares and duties had been thrust upon her, she

must be up and doing while her sorrow was yet fresh; and then with the taste of power, ambition had flowered strong within her and she had gone her way, proud and sufficient. Now these scathing letters of the Proprietor and the Assembly's decision had swept action from her. She must clasp hands with sorrow and grow acquainted with grief.

XXII

FROM that bitter January day Mistress Brent turned to her own affairs; those of the province might go as they would, and they came well nigh to destruction. Claiborne came again, and with full authority from Cromwell, Lord Protector of England, and he in time gave peaceable way to the new governor my Lord Proprietor appointed, when with his silvery tongue he had persuaded Cromwell to grant him his own again.

She saw the Protestant tide of emigration from Virginia set in far up the bay upon the Severn and the flock of refugees from England, and through it all she held her way. St. Anne's was ever one of the most flourishing manors in the colony.

The line of the forest land grew farther and farther inland, in the fastnesses of the woodlands even were clearings of those who held the acres as her tenants; she held claims upon the Potomac and the Patuxent; the love of it all, of shadowy oaks and rippling river, of wide rich fields, of

solemn forests of which she was no longer afraid, the love of life and living grew strong with the years that fed it.

Once a year she gathered her tenants about her. Many and widely scattered as they were, there were vexed questions that must be settled, — questions the laws of the province left in her hands.

The land was still lawless enough for might to be near right; Indians were yet abroad, and were often thievish and mischievous; the lord of the manor must rule well. He must look to his leases and rents; must see that none on his manor "held double measure to buy by the great and sell by the less;" must see there were no vagrants on his land who "would sleep by day and watch by night and fare well and do nothing;" must fix the price of bread and ale; try those who sold corrupt meat or entertained vagrants; fine tenants for allowing their cattle to destroy maize fields, for any crimes of stealth, or, should they wish to push the forestry laws, even for hunting in their woodlands.

Mistress Brent was wont to make of her courts-leet — for so it was called in the parlance of the time — a day not only for settling troublous questions, but afterwards for games and feasts for her servants and gathering together of her neighbors.

She and Jock and Sarah were well nigh wearied out on the afternoon of an October day making ready. There under the oaks was the platform on which she would sit on the morrow, first for the court and afterward for the watching of the games with her neighbors about her; beyond the house the boards were already laid on trestles for the feast. Sarah knew how many loaves of bread, fine and white, how many cakes of maize, how many hams and capons and wild turkeys and haunches of venison had been made ready in her kitchen for it.

The short autumn day was hazy near its close and the air was filled with smell of smoke; many of the farmers would be thrifty and burn their fields before the spring. Mistress Brent, going from place to place to see that all was well done, loitered at length along the gravelled pathway to the edge of the bluff and paused, looking long at the misty river. The waters were still and deeply blue; autumn haze and smoke veiled sky and distant shore; here and there a licking flame broke through and flared wildly; far, far out, faint as a mark drawn straight against the sky, loomed the great mast of a ship, but whether the vessel were large or small, of bay craft or foreign shipping, she could read no sign. In the shifting, veiling mists all was uncertain, and Mistress Mar-

garet turned away, trusting the morrow would be fair.

A red sunset means not always a lowering day. The October dawn was as clear as though mists and rains and clouds had never veiled the river, and Mistress Brent looking from her window soon as her breakfast board was cleared, on dew-wet grass and waving trees and sparkling waterway, saw the glimmer of many a sail that sought her wharf. Far out on the waves loomed a great ship, its sails full set, the light morning winds and ebb tide moving her but slowly.

Mistress Margaret gave her many an anxious glance, and then, her duties pressing thick upon her, forgot; but though she went her way carelessly, there was one there on those decks would put all her hard-won content to test; one who eagerly scanned the strange shores and headlands as the captain stood by him talking of the new land, and whose heart beat hotly for a soldier whose hair was silvered, when the small boat of the ship put him, his mails and servant, ashore at St. Anne's.

With what eagerness did he look about him! He had thought to gaze on savage lands; here was a wide, white beach, there where the terrace dipped was grass green as English turf, here it held a rippling lake, there were towering oaks.

Many boats were at the wharf, — canoe, dugout, and pinnace. He went up the stairway unheeded; there to the left was such a crowd as he might have seen on any village green, and under the shadowing trees was a glint of bright garments and moving, stately figures. He went slowly forward as yet unheeded, until he stood on the edge of the crowd watching with jest and laughter the clumsy sack-race.

The crowd parted, and there in the midst — he knew her on the instant — was a slender figure, and she, turning, looked at him long and strangely; the laughter died from her eyes that shone stern and dark as she came forward to greet him.

"Master Richard White?" she commenced, as if still uncertain who her guest might be.

"Captain White," he corrected. "I have seen much service since last thou didst see me."

"The years have served thee well," she said, with quiet dignity; "none of us would rest in sloth."

"Truth," said Captain White, gallantly, "thou seemest thyself to point thy adage."

"Aye," he had struck the tenderest point of Mistress Brent's heart, "thou shouldst see many of our habitations here."

"Naught could please me better!"

"Thou wilt tarry 'til our feasting is done?"

asked Mistress Brent; but at that the humor of the man took fire, his greeting had been cold enough, but this he would withstand —

"For such I crossed the seas," he said, shortly; and the words rang in Mistress Brent's ears until tenants and guests were gone and the day was done, then, spite of all her talking on gossip of England and the provinces, Captain White finished the speech he had come to say, though he blundered sadly at the first.

When he looked at the quiet, stately woman by his side, he could not go back at one breath to a word of those summer days long agone, even if the memory of them had never died. It was that he tried to tell her at the first, that he remembered her alway, that he thought of her even with his wife at his side.

Then Mistress Margaret had turned scornfully upon him. Had he dared wed one woman with the thought of another in his heart?

It was not he who dared; feeling was too strong. Then had he lied to *one*. Where was his wife?

Dead two years ago! and then he plunged into his story. A young man, his troth already plighted, had met with one he deemed well nigh a child; but when he saw the dawning soul of womanhood in her eyes, God only knew how he learned to love her! So as he never dreamed,

he had loved her; there was no speech for it, the wildness and vastness of it. And he had gone his way, for he hoped to come again and speak words that might make life a paradise. He glanced quickly at the woman by his side and saw her flaming cheek, and knew not it was the fire of shame that burned there. "So easily won did he deem me," she thought, and the shame was all the deeper when she knew it was true, "he had but to come and pluck me like a ripe fruit from the wall."

The woman to whom he was plighted, and his voice hardened a little, had held him to his word. It was a marriage planned of old by his father, and there were family reasons. He need not dwell on his life. His cousin, Father White, had writ of her, Mistress Margaret, oft; her memory had shone through all his days; he needs must look upon her again; now he was come.

Whatever words he said, they were enough to prove his old eloquence and power of love-making were not abated. Mistress Brent could no longer wonder how his words had moved her callow girlhood; but they moved her not now as he talked of the English home to which he would take her; or should she strongly wish to bide in the provinces, any life for him, were she but by his side! She smiled derisively. For what would

she barter her home here? To whom would she give the reins of her life, to be turned and twisted by another's will?

No, please God, she was content; content, too, with her memories, with the thought of one who loved her with a reverence that put to shame such hot wooing, and with a faithfulness that belittled the man by her side.

Content, she told the word to her heart again, as she watched the sail out of sight which bore Captain White to St. Mary's. The evening darkened about her, but the sunset lights were red and the river ran in opalescent hues at her feet as she stood at the top of the stairway in the bluff. Above her rustled the oak leaves, the air was filled with the cries of wild ducks flocking to the reedy marshes, the screams of circling sea-gulls, and the loud cohonk of geese flying wedge-like early southward.

The world was full of life and she a living woman within it, she throbbed with its fulness and thrilled with its beauty. *She was content.*

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